

Everybody's Magazine

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EVERETT SHINN 1917

THE MESSIAH OF THE CYLINDER



By
Victor
Rousseau

ILLUSTRATED
BY
JOSEPH
CLEMENT
COLL

This is the first instalment of a startlingly original and powerful four-part serial that is different from anything ever published in this magazine. This story begins just before the outbreak of the great world war, and its characters and a three-cornered love-affair are projected a hundred years into the future so convincingly that one doesn't stop to question the probability. The story moves on quickly in a world that is socially different in every way from our world of to-day. It is quite possible that you may disagree with the author's forecast of the social structure a hundred years from now. Our social world has whirled dizzily during the past three years, and more than ever before people are speculating on the future. Whatever your own guess about it may be, we are sure that you will follow this story for its tense fiction interest.

Readers of H. G. Wells, who remember "When the Sleeper Wakes," will find in "The Messiah of the Cylinder" a companion picture to that other tale of the future. Mr. Wells foresaw a capitalistic system pushed to extremes. Mr. Rousseau has his very vital characters play out their drama in a world gripped by a perverted and tyrannous socialism without either religion or freedom. We venture to predict that "The Messiah of the Cylinder" will be talked about widely, and we hope that it will interest our readers as it has interested us.

CHAPTER ONE

Over the Coffee-Cups

IF I recall the conversation of that evening so minutely as to appear tedious, I must plead that this was the last occasion on which I saw Sir Spofforth Moore alive. In such a case one naturally remembers insignificant incidents and recalls words that might have been forgotten otherwise; besides, here were the two opposed opinions of life, old as civilization, confronting each other starkly. And, as will be seen, the test was to come in such manner as only one of us could have imagined.

I picture old Sir Spofforth as on that evening: grave, restrained, courteous, yet with the heat of intense conviction burning beneath his measured phrases; and Lazaroff's flushed face and vehement negations; and Esther listening with her quaint seriousness, turning from her father to Lazaroff and back, and to me sometimes, as each of us spoke. Outside, in the moonlight, the shadow of the Institute lay black across the garden of Sir Spofforth's house. The dining-room was fragrant with the scent of the tea-roses that grew beneath the windows.

The Biological Institute was less than five years old, but the London smoke, which drifted beyond Croydon, had already darkened the bricks of bright red to a tolerable terra-cotta. The ivy had grown a good way up the walls. The Institute had accommodated itself to the landscape, as English buildings had the knack of doing. Lazaroff and I had been there under Sir Spofforth since the foundation, and there had never been any others upon the staff, the Institute having been organized for specialized work of narrow scope, though of immense perspective.

It was devoted to private research into the nature of life. The millionaire who had endowed it for this purpose and then died opportunely, had not had time to hamper us with restrictions. Next to endowing us, his death was, perhaps, the most imaginative thing that he had ever accomplished. The Government concerned itself only about vivisection certificates. But Lazaroff and I operated on living animals little, and we never caused pain. Carrel's investigations in New York, a year or two before, had shown that tissue life not only survives the extinction of the general vital

quality, but, under suitable conditions, proliferates indefinitely. We were investigating this tissue life, and our proceedings were quite innocuous. We sought to discover how and where consciousness was born out of the unconscious tissue vitality. Lazaroff had the intuition of genius, and his inductions were amazing. Still, that problem baffled him.

"Pennell," he would say, "at a certain period of development, when millions of cells, working cooperatively, have grouped themselves in certain patterns, producing an organic whole, consciousness comes into play. Why? Is it a by-product and merely the creak that accompanies the wheel? The evolutionary law confutes that view. Nature makes nothing in vain. Then—why?"

Lazaroff was a Pole, although he spoke half a dozen languages with equal fluency. Keen and fanatical, daring, inflexible, he seemed to me the sort of man who would die in the front ranks in a Holy War for Science, if the chance came to him. With boundless faith in matter, his hope for the human race was as strong as his contempt for the man of the day.

"The race is all, Pennell," I hear him say. "We of to-day, who pride ourselves on our accomplishments, are only emerging from the dawn of civilization. We are encumbered still with all the doubts and ghostly fears that the men of the Stone Age carried. Others will build the Temple of Truth upon the foundations which we are laying. Oh, if I could have been born a hundred years from now! For the change is coming fast, Pennell!"

And then, when I professed to doubt the nearness of the change: "If your frontal area varied by five centimeters, Pennell, you would believe. That is your tragedy—to fall short of the norm of to-morrow by those tragic five centimeters." I can see his well-proportioned figure, and the mane of black hair thrown back; the flashing eyes. Animated by religious impulse in place of his materialism, Lazaroff would have gone to the stake as unconcerned as he would certainly have burned others. He had perfected some system of craniometry by which he professed to discover the mental capacity of his subject, and I had permitted him to experiment on me.

Certainly the conditions were ideal for our work. We were both young men,

enthusiasts, and Sir Spofforth Moore, our chief, was nearing eighty. The trustees had picked him for the post because of his great name in the medical world. He was an ideal head. He interfered with us no more than the trustees did. He asked for no results. He knew little of what we did, and initialed our vouchers without demurring. Of course he tried to keep in touch with us, and I confess that a certain quantity of our routine work was pursued partly in concealment of the daring plan that Lazaroff had outlined to me.

In brief, Lazaroff's scheme was this: If animal tissues, removed from the complete organism, can exist in a condition of suspended vitality for an indefinite time, proliferating when placed in a suitable medium, why not the living animal? Lazaroff had selected three monkeys from among our stock for the experiment. They were to be sealed each in a vacuum cylinder, exposed to a temperature reasonably low, and left for a century, in a secret vault built into the cellar-wall beneath the freezing-plant.

Lazaroff's enthusiasm aroused my imagination. "What use is that?" I cried impetuously. "We shall not be here to see the results of the experiment. And what message will monkeys manage to convey to the men of to-morrow concerning our world of to-day? If monkeys, why not men?"

"Pennell," he began, hesitating, "do you want to know why I myself do not—" He stopped. "I am almost ashamed to tell you what it is that makes me wish to live out my life among this generation," he continued. "How strong the primal impulses are in all of us, Arnold! Nature, with her blind but perfectly directed will, warring on mind, and mind rising slowly to dominate her, armed, as she is, with her dreadful arsenal of a thousand superstitions, instincts, terrors. It is a grim battle, Arnold, and many fall by the way."

He turned away abruptly, as if he regretted the half-confidence he had given me. I thought I understood him.

We dined that night with Sir Spofforth and Esther in their new house within a stone's throw of the Institute. Esther was the only child; her mother had died in giving her birth. We four had been intimates during the whole five years of the Institute's existence—strangely isolated, we four, in the busy Surrey town. The memory

of that last night is one of the most poignant of all. How long ago it seems, and how far away those days of youth! If I could have known then that night would be our last together!

The conversation to which I have referred began after dinner, over our coffee. It was our usual hour for disputations, but they had never been so keen, nor Lazaroff so outspoken. Sir Spofforth was a type of the old school, religious, tolerant, yet more disquieted than he was himself aware by the dominant materialism of the younger men. He deplored the new, dangerous doctrines which were permeating society, the decay of morals, the loss of reverence and pride in service. Civilization, he said, seemed dying, and democracy its murderer.

"Dying! It is still struggling in its birth throes!" cried Lazaroff. "We are still enslaved by the traditions of the past, by a worn-out religious system based on the primitive animistic notion of a soul. Science has never found the least trace of a soul; on the contrary, we know beyond doubt that we live in a mechanistic universe of absolute determinism, and that even the so-called moral law has its roots in material necessities."

I can see Sir Spofforth's tolerant yet eager look as he caught up the challenge. "The soul is not to be found in the dissecting-room, Herman; I grant you that," he answered. "I, as you know, have devoted my life to the empirical investigation of truth, and I can not decry that method. But I have always recognized the validity of the metaphysical inquiry. Science must confine her activities within their natural bounds and not seek to play a pontifical part, or the excesses of the Scholastics will be renewed in a darker age than theirs."

"I can not agree with you," cried Lazaroff. "An age is coming when, relieved from their outworn chains, men will look into Nature open-eyed to learn her secrets, and know that she is all. To-day civilization is being choked to death by the effete, the defective, the incompetent, whom a too benign humanitarianism suffers to live beneath the shelter of a worn-out faith and spread its slavish doctrines. Look at progressive America! Even now she dares propose to supply the vivisection tables with the bodies of her criminals. Already, in her most advanced states, she is sterilizing the unfit. The fearful menace of a

race of defectives has laid hold upon the popular imagination. Here any statesman who dared suggest this noble course would be driven from office and mobbed. But England is awaking too. It will go, that relic of degrading, savage superstition called the soul, the barbarous legacy of the past enshrined in a hundred fairy stories. Science will rule. Man will be free. The strictly logical organized state, finely conceived by Wells, will be the nation of the future."

"You want a world of men and women reared like prize cattle and governed by laws as mechanistic as your universe," answered Sir Spofforth. "Well, Herman, we have had that world. That was the pre-Christian world. Your free love, your eugenics have been tried in Sparta and other ancient kingdoms. And we know what those civilizations were. If you eugenists only knew the dreadful crop of dragons' teeth that you are scattering to-day upon the fertile soil of the unthinking mind! Because we, fortunately, live in the millennial lull of a transitional age, you think human nature has changed; that the fantasies of the Crusades will never be repeated in fantastic social wars, and the madness of religious fratricide in the madness of Science become faith. All the old devils are lying low, lurking in the minds of men, ready to spring forth in all their ancient fury when the wise and illogical compromises, evolved through centuries of experience, have been discarded. Without Christianity the moral nature of man would be where it used to be. Social and economic readjustments leave it unchanged, and can not change it."

"A religion of slaves, the apotheosis of the weak and impotent!" cried Lazaroff loudly. "I utterly deny the efficacy of your Christianity. It is a dead faith even now, with its foolish miracles, its preposterous and unscientific dualism."

"And I say," cried Sir Spofforth, rising out of his chair and facing Lazaroff with almost equal energy of manner, "that it is precisely the Christian norm, the unattainable pattern of Christ, working in the human heart, that has carried civilization forward. Why, look backward before Christ lived. Read Pliny, Seneca, Tacitus, learn the hopelessness of life when Rome was highest, and see whether shame and cruelty stirred them except through fear. What of the manners and morals of Athens

when her light burned most brightly? And what is happening in the United States to-day, as her old governing class, having spent its inheritance of Christian culture, draws to its end? Can any sane man doubt the future there? Is not the rumble of the storm becoming louder yearly? Look at her decaying morals, with unlimited divorce and no national church! It is just the ideal of Christ, enshrined in the minds of a few leaders of character and trained convictions, that has kept the world on its slow course of progress. And nothing else saves us from the unstable tyrannies of ancient days. Well, I must really offer you all an apology," continued Sir Spofforth penitently. "Enough of these debatable subjects. We two shall never in the world agree on politics or religion, Herman. Let us go up-stairs into the drawing-room."

CHAPTER TWO

The Great Experiment

SINCE Sir Spofforth was a little infirm, and leaned on my arm to make his slow ascent of the stairs, we entered the drawing-room a full minute after the others. The room was empty; Esther and Lazaroff had gone into the conservatory on the south side. I heard the rustle of the girl's dress as she moved among the palms, and Lazaroff speaking earnestly and quickly in a low voice.

"Sit down, Arnold," said Sir Spofforth, subsiding stiffly into his armchair. "I confess I was a little upset this evening. I am not intolerant; but Herman's notions seem, unfortunately, to represent a growing portion of the younger men. Then there's the divorce agitation here, as in America, and the inevitable result will be reaction to the harem from which Christianity delivered women. They're groping after the old gods, the young generation; perhaps, if there is war, it means that Holy Russia is yet to save the world. I sha'n't live to see the change that is coming, though. There's only one thing makes me want to live longer, Arnold, and that is Esther's future. It would be a satisfaction to me to see her happily married. Arnold, if an old man may be frank, sometimes I have almost thought that you two cared for each other."

"You were quite right in that, sir," I replied. "I do care for her."

"And she, I am sure, has a very warm



LAZAROFF ROLLED THE HEAVY CYLINDER UPON THE FLOOR, AND I ENTERED 'AND SQUEEZED DOWN TO THE BOTTOM. "COME OUT, ARNOLD," PLEADED ESTHER.

feeling for you, Arnold. There is nobody whom I would be more glad to have for a son-in-law than yourself."

"Well, sir, the fact is, we are not sure that our views are altogether harmonious," I confessed. "I am, as you know, not opposed to women's enfranchisement, but skeptical about the theories for revolutionizing women's status, while Esther——"

"Esther is a full-fledged suffragist and has exalted notions about the race of the future. Tush, my boy! Never hold back because of intellectual differences. The race spirit, sitting up aloft and pulling the strings, is laughing at you."

"But, to be frank, Sir Spofforth, it was not I who held back," I answered.

"Hm! I see!" he answered, nodding. Then, very seriously: "Arnold, I want you to win her. It would embitter my last days to see Esther the wife of Herman Lazaroff. I have watched him and studied him; it isn't his materialism, Arnold; it's his infernal will. He'll break everybody and everything that conflicts with it when he wakes up and knows his powers. Now he doesn't know himself at all. I tell you, Herman Lazaroff, able fellow as he is, and splendid brain, is a machine of devilish energy, and, unfortunately, fashioned for purely destructive purposes."

I was searching for a reply when Esther and Lazaroff came back from the conservatory. Esther's face was flushed, and she looked utterly miserable; but I was startled to see the look upon Lazaroff's. I tried to enter into a conversation with him, but he stared morosely at Esther, who was standing near the conservatory entrance, and seemed hardly to hear me.

"Sir Spofforth, Esther is interested in our new freezing-plant," he said presently. "I thought, with your permission, that I would take her there to-night and let her see the place lit by electricity. You'll come too, Pennell?"

Sir Spofforth rose out of his chair slowly. "Don't be long, my dear," he said to Esther. "I shall not wait up for you. Good-night, Herman. Good-night, Arnold." He passed out of the room and began to ascend the stairs. He turned. "Arnold," he began. "No, never mind. I will tell you to-morrow."

He never told me. He was gone, and we three went down-stairs out of the house, and crossed the garden toward the Institute,

whose squat form blocked the view of the road. Croydon, in the distance, hummed like a huge dynamo. The Bear dipped slantingly above; the wind was shaking down the fading petals of the rambler-roses. Lazaroff led the way, walking a short distance in front of us, toward the annex, a building just completed, in which was the new freezing-plant, with our few guinea-pigs and the monkeys destined for the great experiment. He drew a key from his pocket and began fumbling with the lock. Esther stepped in the shadows beside me.

"He asked me to marry him," she said. "I told him never—never! I used to think that I could care for him, Arnold, but in that instant I knew—yes, I knew."

And I knew too, and I took her in my arms in the shadow of the Institute. She lifted her mouth to mine. All the while Lazaroff was fumbling with the lock. Yet I am sure he was aware, by virtue of that instinct which tells us all vital things.

When he had opened the door he turned a switch, and the interior leaped into view instantly. Twenty points of light pierced the shadows.

"Come in, Arnold," he said. "I will lead the way, and you two can follow."

We passed the case of guinea-pigs, which squealed and scurried among their straw. The monkeys, awakened by the light, began to chatter and grimaced at us. A tiny marmoset stretched out its black, human arms between the bars appealingly. It looked very lonely and childlike as it blinked at us. What a terrific journey into the future Lazaroff, like some god, had planned for that atom of flesh, with its half-conscious and fear-harried soul!

We entered the ice-room, passing between two silent dynamos. The freezing-plant was already in operation, but it was always shut down at six, when George, the machinist, went off duty, and the temperature did not rise much during the night. It was bitterly cold. Lazaroff preceded us down a flight of new concrete steps which had just dried. The cellar into which we descended had been used for the storage of packing-cases, and we had always gone down by a short ladder before. I knew Lazaroff's workmen had been making alterations, but I had not seen the place since their arrival.

We stepped inside and Lazaroff switched on a tiny light. Now I saw that we were

standing within a narrow chamber with cement walls and roof, making the place impervious to light and sound. It was several feet below the level of the ground. The sole contents were three large metal cylinders, looking like giant thermos bottles. Each was about six feet long—too long for a monkey, certainly—and had a glass plate in the center of its length. Lazaroff drove his heel with all his might against the glass of the nearest cylinder.

"It is quite unbreakable, you see," he said. "In fact, it is as strong as the nickel vanadium of the cylinders, which is practically indestructible. That is because it is built up with interlayers of transparent celluloid. 'Suffragette glass,' the makers call it."

"But what are these for?" asked Esther.

"These, Esther, are to convey three monkeys into the next century," said Lazaroff. "By instantaneously suspending animation within a vacuum at a temperature of 25 degrees Fahrenheit, we hope to maintain the bodily organism intact, and with it what Pennell would call the soul, until the time for their awakening comes."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Esther, shuddering.

I examined the cylinder nearest me with intense interest. A small dial was set into its cap.

Lazaroff anticipated my inquiries. "That is the most ingenious part of the mechanism," he explained. "It is a hundred-year clock, made especially for me by Jurgensen of Copenhagen. It runs true within about three-tenths of a second during the entire period. The alarm can be set to any year. A good alarm-clock for lazy people, Esther! This one, you see, I have already set to a hundred years ahead. This is at sixty-five; I shall set that to a hundred presently, for we don't want one of our monkeys to wake up two monkey generations ahead of his friends. This one is not set. Now observe! I turn the pointer on the dial. The large figures are years. The smaller ones are days. Now, as soon as the cap is screwed on, the internal vacuum causes this lever to fall, catching this cam and starting the mechanism. We have, then, a bottled monkey in an indestructible shell, for only the most powerful trip-hammer could make much impression on nickel vanadium of this thickness. It is fire-proof, because no quantity of external

heat could pass the non-conducting vacuum which protects the interior. It will be, in fact, impossible to release the inmate before the appointed time, and, if it could be done, death would ensue immediately."

"Why?" I inquired.

"The purpose of these precautions, do you mean? Simply to prevent well-meaning but curious humanitarians who may come into possession of the cylinder fifty years hence from attempting resuscitation. I have described this carefully in my papers."

"But why should the premature opening of the cylinder cause immediate death?"

"Because resuscitation must be gradual. If air were admitted in any quantity before revivification had begun it would bring in a swarm of micro-organisms that no filter could stay, and they would make short work of our subject. Again, unless the quantity of air be proportioned to the powers of respiration, the body, which would be in much the condition of a vegetative organism, would probably take up the carbon dioxide and so destroy itself. At least, that is my theory. The air must enter under slight pressure, in minute quantities, during a period of about ten days. Well, as the timepiece slowly runs down, the cap begins to unscrew, admitting air in larger and larger quantities. At the exact end of the period the cap flies off and the subject wakes."

"Herman, I don't like this," said Esther hurriedly. "It isn't right. And I am sure father does not know about it."

"My dear Esther, I assure you it is a very conservative scientific experiment," Lazaroff replied, laughing. "Come, Arnold, why not get in yourself and try how it feels? You are not afraid?"

"In my clothes?"

"Certainly. The cold will sterilize them."

"Arnold, I don't want you to get into that thing," Esther protested.

"Of course, if our friend is afraid that I am going to screw him up for a century—" began Lazaroff.

"I am not at all afraid," I returned, somewhat nettled, though the invitation did not appeal to me. "How do I get in?"

"I'll have to help you," Lazaroff answered. "It was not made for a big man in clothes. Button your coat. Now—put your arms down by your sides." He rolled the heavy cylinder upon the floor, and I



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entered and squeezed down to the bottom. Lazaroff looked at me and burst into loud laughter. "Not much room to turn round, is there!" he said, and with an effort he raised the cylinder and stood it on its base again.

"Come out, Arnold," pleaded Esther. I saw that she was trembling, and her expression was one of terror. But I was quite unable to move, and above me I saw Lazaroff on tiptoe, smiling at my predicament.

"Now, if I were going to be so unkind as to send you into the next century," he said, "to be the only vitalist in a world of gross materialism, I should——"

"Please, Herman, for my sake!" Esther implored.

"—put on the cap like this," he finished.

He had not told me that the cap was self-fitting. He must have touched some mechanism that I had not seen, for instantly the cap began to whirl down. Through the glass I caught a last glimpse of Esther's terrified face. It blurred and disappeared as my breath dimmed the glass and frosted it. I heard the whir of the cap mechanism end in a jarring click. I gasped for air; there was none. My head swam, my throat was closed; the blackness was pricked into flecks of fire. I groped for memory through unconsciousness—and ceased.

CHAPTER THREE

In the Cellar

I HAVE heard patients, on emerging from the chloroform swoon, describe how, before awaking, they had viewed themselves lying unconscious upon their beds, detailing correctly the posture of their unconscious bodies and inert limbs. Such descriptions are not infrequent and do not vary greatly.

So, now, I seemed to see myself.

I am sure that was no dream of the vague borderland between death and life. I saw the pallid face, so shrunken that the skin clung to the edged bones, and the dry, brittle hair; the pinched lips and waxen hands. I saw myself as if from some non-spatial point, and with singular indifference, except that one fragment of conscious knowledge, detached from my serene omniscience, troubled me. I had to return within that physical envelope; and behind me lay dim memories, quite untranslatable, but raptur-

ous, which made that projected incarnation dreadful.

Vague images of earthly things began to float upward out of the dark—as it were, symbols of physical life whose meaning remained obscure. Gradually, through an alternation of dreams and blankness, I began to be aware of the parched and withered body that covered me. A thousand darts were stabbing in my flesh, like purgatorial fire. No motor nerve had yet awakened, but all over my skin the opening capillaries pricked me like red-hot needles. Faint memories of events rushed through my brain, and, though I recalled no intervening period, I was sensible that those events had happened infinitely long ago.

Suddenly I gasped. I breathed. Simultaneously, with a loud click, the cap of the cylinder flew off, air rushed in, a stabbing light broke through my closed eyelids, and I fainted.

It was, of course, the gradual unscrewing of the cylinder cap as the mechanism ran down, and the consequent admission of minute quantities of oxygen, that had begun to revive me. I must have passed ten days of partial consciousness before the cylinder opened.

I was breathing when I became conscious once more, and my heart was straining in my breast. I got my eyes open. There followed hours of light-tortured delirium, during which I struggled to regain the power of motion. After infinite endeavor I managed to place one hand upon the other, and passed it up the wrist and forearm. The muscles were all but gone. The ulna and radius were easily encircled, either of them, with my finger and thumb.

I tried to flex my elbows, and this next grim battle lasted an incalculable time. Gradually, as I struggled, I became aware of some obstacle on either side of me. For the first time since my awakening I knew that I was inside the cylinder. But I did not know that it had fallen upon its side until it slid forward, and my puny efforts dislodged me and flung me free into a pool of water. I drew in a deep breath, feeling my lungs crackle like old parchment, and plunged my face and shoulders beneath the surface. My skin sucked up the moisture like a sponge, and I managed to get a few drops past my swollen tongue. I had just sense enough to turn my face upward before I lost consciousness again.

I must have slept all night, for when I awoke again, the light was still bright, although less torturing as the pupils learned to contract. I began to look about me. Beside me lay the cylinder, buried almost to the top in mud. I was still within the secret vault, but a portion of the brick partition had fallen inward in such a way as to screen the few visible inches of the vanadium case that had housed me, so that nobody would have suspected its presence in the chamber. I remembered that there had been two more; I looked about me, but there was no sign of them, and I concluded that Lazaroff had taken them away.

Now I began to realize that there had been a considerable change in my surroundings since I had become unconscious. The light that had so distressed me came through a hole in the roof of the cellar adjoining, filtering thence through the aperture in the partition wall, and what had seemed at first intolerably bright was dim indeed. In place of the concrete floor there was a swamp of mud, with pools of water here and there, and the dirt was heaped up in the corners and against the walls. Moss and splotched fungi grew among the tumbled bricks, and everywhere were spore stains and microscopic plant-growth.

I was bewildered by the signs of dilapidation everywhere. The guinea-pigs and monkeys were gone; the cellar was empty, save for some low, rough benches of wood fitted on trestles and set about the floor. On the wall at the far end hung something that gradually took form as I strained my aching eyes to a focus.

It was a crucifix. The cellar had become a subterranean chapel. The cross was hewn coarsely of pine, and the figure that hung on it was grotesquely carven; yet there was the pathos of wistful, ignorant effort in the workmanship that bespoke the sincerity of the artist.

I made my difficult way upon my hands and knees through the gap in the wall, across the mud floor of the cellar, toward the stairs, resting several times from weariness before I reached my destination. But when I arrived at the far end, where the stairs should have been, I received a shock that wholly unnerved me. The stairs were gone. In place of them was a débris of rubble and broken stones, as firmly set as though workmen had built it into the wall. The mass was immovable, and it must have

been there for years, because, out of the thin soil that had drifted in, a little oak-tree sprang, twisting its spindling stem to rear its crown toward the patch of daylight overhead.

At last I understood. . . . I had come to realize the fact that my sleep had been a prolonged one: it might have lasted days, or even weeks, I had thought, as with cataleptics. But an entire century!—that idea had been too grotesque for me to consider it. That Sir Spofforth, with whom, it seemed, I had dined almost yesterday, had gone, ages ago, to his long home; Lazaroff, Esther, whom I loved; that generations had come into birth and died. . . . It was too cruel a jest. I wept. I raved and called for Esther. Surely a hundred years had never passed, turning her brown hair to gray, lining her gentle face, carrying at last the gift of death to her, while I lay like a stone underground, encased in the cylinder!

Presently I turned my attention to the cellar roof. To reach this it was necessary to drag one of the benches beneath the hole and scramble up, clinging to the sides of the aperture with my fingers and bracing my feet against the wall. This feat, requiring the pull of strong biceps and a gymnast's agility, was for the present impossible. I must wait till I grew stronger.

It is a strange thing that I had not associated the need of waiting with the conception of food until I found the box. I stumbled upon it by accident, scratching my wrist against its edge as I crawled round the walls. I saw the corner projecting from a mound of mud, and, scraping some of the dirt away, I lifted the pine-wood lid. Inside the box I found a quantity of biscuit, similar to that which used to be served to soldiers during their maneuvers, when bread could not be had. I dipped one in the stagnant water, and, as I swallowed the first morsels, became conscious of the ravenous need for sustenance.

I can hardly estimate the duration of the imprisonment that ensued. It was of days and nights that followed each other in a monotonous succession, during which, like some hibernating beast, I crouched and groped within the cellar, dozing and shivering, and gnawing incessantly at my food.

But my strength returned with wonderful swiftness. As in the case of a typhoid convalescent, every morsel of food seemed to

go to rebuild my body. Meanwhile, daily I practised exercise to restore suppleness to my limbs. I managed on the second day to drag one of the benches beneath the hole in the roof, and, standing on this, endeavored continually to draw myself up; but on each occasion my struggles only brought down a shower of earth and stones, and I resigned myself to a period of further waiting. And in the end my escape developed in the manner the least imaginable. It began with my discovery of a second box, in another of the mounds. I opened it in the anticipation of finding food, perhaps more palatable. Instead of this I found a number of strange batons of wood. They resembled policemen's truncheons, but each had a tiny rounded plate of jelly-like, glassy substance near the head, and there was evidently some sort of mechanism at the other end, for where the handle narrowed for the grip was a push-button, with a heavy brass guard, so strong and stiff that only with difficulty could I raise it.

I carried the implement beneath the hole in the roof and laid it on the bench, intending to examine it more carefully as soon as the sun appeared. Meanwhile, this being exercise time, I mounted the bench and tried to pull myself up. I failed; yet I detected considerable improvement in my muscular power, and, becoming exhausted, I prepared to descend from the bench to the ground. Inadvertently, in doing so, I placed my foot upon the truncheon, depressing the push-button.

The truncheon tipped to the floor, pointing upward. I saw a ray of dazzling silvery light shoot from the head, and with a crash a shower of stones fell on me, bearing me to the ground in a cloud of dust.

I must have lain stunned for some minutes. I was aroused by the warmth of the sun on my eyelids. I started to my feet. The hole in the roof was twice its former size, and a heap of fallen stones and pieces of brick reached from the cellar floor to the ground above, offering an easy stepway.

In a moment I was scrambling up the stones. I trod upon leaves. I looked about me.

I was standing in the midst of what appeared to be an ancient forest of oak and beech trees, whose bare boughs, covered with snow, shook under a gray sky above a carpet of withered, snow-spread leaves; and under these were endless heaps of

disintegrating bricks. In vain I looked about me for the Institute. There was no sign of it, nor of Sir Spofforth's house, nor Croydon itself, save for the vast brick piles, heaped under the mounds of earth. Nowhere was any sign of habitation, or anything but the same forest, and the dead leaves scurrying over the bricks before the chilling wind.

And now my final doubt, which had bred hope, was gone. I ran through the forest, on and on, shouting like a madman and beating my breast, stumbling over the brick heaps that lay everywhere, plunging through the dead undergrowth, heedless of any course. I must have run for ten minutes before my breath failed me. I collapsed beside an ancient road, overgrown with shrubs and saplings, yet still discernible in its course between the tall trees that bordered it. Before me, far away at the end of the vista, I saw a line of white against the gray horizon.

I flung myself upon my face and prayed with all my will to die.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Road to London

A SHADOW swept over me, and, looking up, I saw an airplane gliding noiselessly above; it stopped, hung poised and motionless, and then dropped slowly and almost vertically into the road, coming to the ground within a dozen yards of where I lay.

There stepped out a man in a uniform of pale blue, having insewn upon the breast a piece of white linen cut to the shape of a swan. He came toward me with hesitancy, and at length stood over me, staring at my rags and then at my face, with an expression of the greatest bewilderment.

"Where's your brass, friend?" he inquired, speaking in a high-pitched and rather nasal tone. He rubbed his smooth-shaven face thoughtfully. "Where's your brass?" he repeated.

I perceived that he wore about his neck a twisted cord whose ends were fastened through the loop of a brass plate, stamped with letters and figures. "For God's sake, tell me what year this is!" I burst out wildly.

At the expletive he recoiled in obvious dismay; he cast a very searching look at me, in which I thought I could detect alarm. But then he began to smile in a half-humorous, kindly way.

"You're one of the escaped defectives, aren't you?" he inquired. "But where are you lying up? Are your friends near?"

I sprang up, and for the moment I had forgotten my predicament. "Will you take me to my friends in London?" I asked. In my mind was the memory of a university acquaintance who lived in St. John's Wood. But then the swift remembrance came back to me, and I hung my head and groaned.

"Now, friend," he said, "I think your head got turned in the Council factories, as was very natural. And you wanted to see the world. But you aren't able to take care of yourself, and your friends seem to have abandoned you. I think you had better go back to London. But of course it must be the district police station. I can't risk my liberty looking for your friends. Are you resolved to go? If not, remember I haven't seen you."

"I'll go," I answered.

"Right! Step in!" he said; and I took my place in the airplane.

In spite of my depression of mind, or perhaps because the days of horror that I had spent in the cellar produced the inevitable reaction, I began to feel the exhilaration of the flight as we ascended to about a thousand feet and made our way northward. And now the white line that I had seen on the horizon began to assume the shape of crenellations, which in their turn became buildings of immense height and symmetrical aspect. I almost forgot my situation in admiration and amazement at the panorama which began to unfold beneath me.

The county of Surrey appeared to be an extensive forest, terminating in a waste of dismantled brick houses, the suburbs of old London, which extended on either side as far as my eyes could see, until the forest covered them. Then the modern town began: an outer ring of what I took to be enormous factories and storage-houses; an inner ring, no doubt of residences; and then the nucleus, the most splendid city that the imagination could have devised.

This consisted of an array of enormous edifices, with fronts perfectly plain, and evidently constructed of brick-faced steel-work, but all glistening a dazzling white which made my eyes water, and rising uniformly some forty-five or fifty stories. I saw innumerable airplanes at rest, suspended high above the streets, while others flitted hither and thither over the roofs, and

a whole fleet was moored some distance away, apparently in the center of the city, half hidden by a singular building which awakened associations in my mind, though I was unable to name it.

It had a round dome, being, in fact, the only domed building that I could see. This resembled the old dome of St. Paul's, but covered only the central portion of the enormous architectural mass, and appeared to float in the air above an aerial garden laid out with walks that radiated from a flat building which filled the space between the dome and the roof beneath it. I surmised that this must be the legislative chamber. The entire mass was surrounded by a double wall, as though one had drawn an inner and an outer circle of stone around it, with a roofed space of perhaps ninety feet from the one to the other. These walls were castellated, and a number of conical-shaped masses were mounted on them. Long, graceful bridges on arches connected the inner wall with the domed building, and walls and building glistened so brilliantly from base to summit that the glow seared my eyes like sunlight.

As we were now flying at a low altitude, I turned my attention to the streets, which appeared like cañons far beneath us. Along these swarmed a multitude of travelers, dressed in two colors only, white and blue, the latter vastly predominating. I could see no vehicles, and I noted that the streets themselves were in motion. Most of those journeying seemed content to lean back against the railings, the lowest bars of which projected, forming a continuous seat, and rest. Along the front of the buildings ran single tracks, connecting at intervals with the streets below by means of public elevators, which constantly shot up and down with their human freight. These tracks were placed one above another at ten-story intervals, so that there were in reality three or four rows of streets, ranging from the ground to the upper portions of the buildings, all filled with travelers.

My companion stayed the airship and tapped me on the arm. I started, and saw that he was regarding me with the same humorous and perplexed expression.

"I must put you off here, friend," he said. "I think I have done the best I can for you. You would have died in the forest, while here—there is a chance for you. And it's better to go to the leather vats for a few

years than to die. If ever we meet again I'll know you. Mine's one of our oldest names. They say it was a common one before civilization. It's Jones. Now we'll go down."

He touched a lever and the airplane swooped downward and came to rest upon the roof of a building immediately beneath us. On this I saw a number of men, apparently practising gymnastic exercises; and hardly were we at rest when two of them came running up to us. They were clad in blue uniforms resembling that of the air-scout, but instead of the white swan there was a shield-shaped piece of linen upon the back and breast of each.

"What's this?" they demanded in the same breath.

"One of your defectives," answered the air-scout. "I found him in the forest."

The two men rushed at me and pulled me from the machine. They searched me rapidly for weapons. Satisfied that I was unarmed, they shouted simultaneously to the air-scout. "You'll divide?"

"Keep it all!" answered Jones tartly, as he rose into the air.

The two men rushed me across the roof of the building into an elevator, and, when we had descended, out upon the street. After a short journey on one of the moving platforms we descended at the entrance to one of the innumerable shining buildings, over which was inscribed something in undecipherable characters.

But, quickly as we had gone, the rumor of my arrest seemed to have spread faster, for our approach was blocked by a vast and constantly increasing mob, which, attracted by my rags, I suppose, pressed closely about me and uttered shrieks of hooting laughter. I heard the word "defective" banded from mouth to mouth.

I looked at these people attentively. There were both men and women present, all wearing clothing of the pale blue color, which seemed to be prescribed, although the cut of each garment was to some extent individual. In effect, the men wore sack suits of woolen material, with loose, short trousers fastened with laces about the ankles. The women wore rather short skirts, reaching to the tops of their high boots of flexible leather, and the fashion seemed to run to large buttons and loose sleeves. Upon the breast, near the shoulder, each person wore a small linen badge, pictorially indicative of his occupation.

What disconcerted me was the shrewd, mocking smile upon each face. I glanced from one to another, seeking to find something of the same friendly interest that I felt, and met hard, mirthless eyes and mouths awry with sneers.

Another thing that startled and almost terrified me was the absence of a certain conventionality that had ruled even the least conventional in my other world. For instance, among those gibing at me was a gray-bearded man who danced before me like a small urchin, yelling opprobrious terms; another made an expressive pantomime of death; a girl stuck out her tongue at me. A gray-haired woman put out her foot to trip me; if there had been stones I think they would have flung them at me. But my captors, linking their arms in mine, made a rush forward, scattering the mob right and left, and bore me through a huge, swinging door into a rotunda, wherein a number of other policemen were seated with prisoners, and thence into a court-room.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Strangers' Bureau

THE clerk was a little obsequious man in blue, with the device of a pair of scales in front of his shoulder. The magistrate, a pompous, surly-visaged old man in white, wearing about his shoulders a lusterless black cape, which seemed a truncation of the old legal gown, was clipping his nails with a pair of pocket scissors and listening to the police, who seemed to be all talking to him at the same time.

Placing me upon a platform near the desk, my captors stepped forward and began an explanation in low tones, which were not meant to reach my ears, and did not.

"Well, what have you to say?" the magistrate bawled at me. "Where do you come from? Tell the truth, or I'll commit you to the leathers. Why are you in masquerade? Where's your brass? Your number? Your print? Your district—or are you from one of the cities?"

The clerk wagged his finger at me. "Number, district, province, city, print, brass?" he inquired. He paused and looked at me. "Brach or dolicoph? Whorl, loop or median? Facial, cephalic, and color indexes? Your Binet rating? Your Sanson test?"

But, inasmuch as I made no attempt to answer these baffling questions, the clerk

ceased to ply me and looked up at his superior for instructions. The magistrate was leaning forward, watching me attentively; and now he began to smile as if he had suddenly grasped the situation.

"I can tell you what you are," he said, shaking his finger at me. "You're a Spaniard masquerading as a defective in order to get into the workshops and corrupt the morons there."

"Now, I should call him Russian," said the clerk, looking up at his superior. "He is undoubtedly a brach, you see. And that would make the offense a capital one," he added complacently.

"He will have to go before the Council," the magistrate answered. "Have him standardized and commit him to the care of the Strangers' Guard, pending his ascription by the Council."

My captors hurried me away. In the street a large crowd, which had evidently assembled to catch sight of me, greeted me with noisy hooting. But the moving platform quickly carried us away.

The building which we now entered contained a large room on the ground floor, with numerous desks ranged round the walls. Behind each desk a clerk in blue was seated, either idly contemplating the scene before him, or attending disdainfully to the business of some applicant. I was taken to a desk near the door.

"Committed stranger," explained the policeman laconically.

The clerk extracted some metal counters from the drawer, which he closed with a bang and locked, and thrust them toward me.

"What am I to do with these?" I asked.

"Spaniard," explained the policeman to the clerk, whose expression of amazement changed to one of malignant mirth.

"Your guest-money," the clerk screamed, enunciating the words as though, being deaf, I were a lip-reader.

"What a barbarian!" murmured a young woman with a typewriter badge on her shoulder.

I picked up the metal counters and examined them. They were very crudely made, and without milled edges. Two of them appeared to be of aluminum; on one side was an ant in relief, and, under it, the inscription LABOR COMMON 37. On the other side were the words HALF HEKTONE—FIFTY ONES. There were two smaller pieces, of a

yellowish gray, each stamped 25 ONES.

The policeman next took me by the moving platform to the Strangers' Bureau. Here I was stripped and examined by three physicians, photographed in several positions; my finger-prints were taken, and my height, weight, and facial, cranial, and color indexes. Then a dapper little clerk in blue passed a tape measure in several ways about my head, and stood off and looked at me with a regretful expression.

"That's too bad!" he said.

"What is bad?" I inquired.

"The difference is five centimeters, but with that frontal development it is reducible to one, but—well, I'm afraid you are a brach," he said.

The meaning of this word suddenly leaped into my mind. "You mean my head is brachycephalic?" I asked.

"There is no doubt of it," he answered, and, coming nearer under the pretense of measuring me again, he began to whisper. "You know, the measure is flexible," he said, glancing apprehensively about him. "I could get you into the dolichoph class—"

"The long-heads?"

"Yes," he murmured, looking at me with an expression of mutual understanding.

"But what advantage would that be to me?" I inquired.

"They say," he whispered, "that the Council is penalizing the brachs several points. It is Doctor Sanson's new theory, you know, that the brachs are more defective than the dolichophs. Now I would risk making you a dolichoph for—half a hektone?"

I flushed with indignation. "Do you expect me to bribe you?" I began.

The clerk leaped back. "This subject is a brach!" he shouted, to drown my words; and a superior clerk at a desk near by noted the numbers that he gave upon a form, and then looked at me with intense disgust.

So I was set down as brachycephalic. Then I was made to sit before what they called an improved Binet board, containing a number of small wooden pegs, which were to be shifted, according to instructions, within a limited time. Word associations followed—a childish game at which I had played during the course of my medical training. Finally, I received a suit of a bluish-gray color, the strangers' uniform, I was informed, and a pair of soft, high

buskins. A metal badge, stamped with letters and figures, was hung about my neck by a cord, and I was turned over to the charge of a blue-clad grizzled man of shortish stature, with a small, peaked beard, and a kindly expression in his eyes that strangely disconcerted me. There was a patient humility about his bearing, and yet, I fancied, a sort of stubborn power, a consciousness of some secret strength.

"I am the Strangers' Guard," he said in a kindly manner. "You are, I understand, a foreigner, and waiting to be ascribed. But it is not necessary to make any statement to me. I am the Guard for this district—nothing more; and my duty is to make you comfortable until the Council summons you. So come along, S 6 1845. My name is David."

I told him mine, mentioning the Christian name only, as he had done.

As we halted for a moment at the entrance to the building he pulled a watch from his pocket. I saw that the dial, which was not faced with glass, but of transparent porcelain, beneath which were the hands, had ten main sections, each comprising ten smaller ones.

"Ten hours and seventy-four," he said. "We dine at one-fifty. That leaves us seventy-six minutes to get home."

CHAPTER SIX

In the Strangers' House

STANDING on the middle platform of what seemed to be one of the principal streets, and traveling at a speed of about eight miles an hour, I looked around me with increasing astonishment. I do not know which attracted my attention more, the crowds or the buildings.

"What is the purpose of the dazzling paint on these buildings?" I asked, for my eyes ached from the dazzling luster, which seemed now white, now faintly blue. "Blue is an unusual color—"

"Blue? Where, Arnold?"

"There—and there!"

"Why, that is glow, not blue. Surely you are not color-blind, Arnold? Or it can not be that where you come from they have only the old seven colors in the spectrum?"

"From red to violet," I replied.

He looked at me very earnestly. "We have had nine for at least twenty years," he said. "Mull, below red, and glow, above

violet—what our ancestors called ultra-violet, and believed invisible, though it was staring them in the face everywhere all the time. There used to be a theory that the color sense has developed in sudden spurts, with civilization. But that color-blindness of yours would fascinate Doctor Sanson, and penalize you a good many points too. I should make no reference to it, Arnold."

It occurred to me that he had not answered my question.

"Here is the Bureau of Statistics," he continued, as we traveled past another of the interminable buildings. "And this is the Bureau of Prints and Indexes. There are more than a thousand million records within. This is the Bureau of Economics. This of Pedigrees and Relationships. And here is the Exhibition of Rare Germs."

The streets were scrupulously clean, and roofed, as I had surmised, with crystal. In this part of the city the moving portion occupied only the center of the roadway, that which would formerly have been called the pavement being devoted to resting and strolling places. I commented upon the fact that hardly a woman wore jewelry.

"Really, Arnold," said David, scanning me again with that penetrating glance of his, "you seem to me like a stranger dropped out of another planet. It was the introduction of the labor hour as the unit of currency that ended that barbarian habit."

"Why?" I inquired.

"Because gold and silver have no longer arbitrary values, and therefore possess no more significance than other metals. The mining of what were called precious stones is prohibited as unproductive labor. A few women own ancestral rings, brooches, and bracelets, but it is really illegal, although the law is not strictly enforced. Here is our district store. Would you like to look inside?"

I assented, and we stepped off the moving portion of the street. David led me to the entrance of a large building, before each of whose several entrances a woman sat within a cage of crystal.

"Change your pieces!" she cried at intervals, in a high-pitched, monotonous voice. "Change pieces or show brasses!"

"We change our coins here," David explained. "But purchases of more than half a hektone are made on the credit system. Our brasses act as identification checks.



THE RUMOR OF MY ARREST SPREAD, AND OUR APPROACH WAS BLOCKED BY A VAST MOB WHICH PRESSED CLOSELY ABOUT ME.



I LOOKED AT THESE PEOPLE ATTENTIVELY. WHAT DISCONCERTED ME WAS THE
SHREWD, MOCKING SMILE ON EACH FACE.



The district clearing-house keeps a complete record of every citizen's financial status, and receives all records of transactions every evening."

I had expected to see all the products of the world spread out within. I was surprised to find, instead, that only a single sample of each sort of merchandise was kept, the goods themselves being stored in warehouses adjoining the factories, to cut down the cost of distribution. Seeing an excellent blue overcoat of fine cheviot, at David's suggestion I paid thirty ones for it, and ordered one of this kind to be sent me at the Strangers' House of District 6.

I asked no more questions, and we traveled back for some twenty-five minutes by the new reckoning, or fifteen by the old one. It seemed to me, though I could not be sure,

that David took me by a long detour to avoid passing the domed building. At length we stopped in front of a large edifice of the uniform height and style.

"This is the District Strangers' House," said he.

We stepped into one of the numerous small elevators, David pressed a button, and the cage shot up to the top story. Opposite us was a door with a push-button at the side. David rang, and a moment later the door opened, revealing a girl about eighteen years of age, who looked at me with parted lips and an expression which was unmistakably one of fear.

"Arnold, this is my daughter, Elizabeth," said David, after he had kissed her. "My dear, Arnold is a new stranger from a distant province and under our special care."

The girl shot a quick, dubious, searching glance at me. I met it steadily, and her eyes dropped. Again she looked at me, and my gaze appeared to reassure her, for in a very unaffected manner she gave me her hand, and we went through a hall into a living-room, and thence into a simply furnished dining-room. It much resembled one of my own century, except that there were no pictures and the table-linen was black; and between the two rooms was a small enclosed space containing a telephone funnel with a number of knobs and levers disposed about its sides, and a dumb-waiter, no doubt connecting with the house kitchen. The uppermost street ran past the window, which was small and placed high in the wall. Occasionally I could see the hatless heads of passing pedestrians.

"Anything new to you, Arnold?" inquired my host, as we took our places.

"Principally the color of the table-linen," I answered. "Black seems strange to me."

"Black?" inquired David in surprise. "Why, that is what we call mull, and not at all like black to me. For my part I prefer the old-fashioned white table-linen, but two years ago, when the plans to dress us in



mull instead of blue were changed at the last moment, the Linen Boss had accumulated a large quantity of mull linen in the public stores, on speculation, the loss of which would have hurt him badly—our industries being autonomous—and so good citizens were asked to change the color of their table-cloths and napkins."

"If father had told me that he was going to bring home a guest—" Elizabeth began.

"But I didn't know it myself, Elizabeth," said David. "Of course I could have telephoned you, but—"

"Never do that!" the girl exclaimed, and I saw the look of fear upon her face again.

"We order what we want from the sub-kitchen each morning," David explained, crossing the room in order to press the button beside the shaft. "It is a great improvement on the old family kitchen. At first it was proposed that all should eat in common, but that was one of the points on which civilization had to yield to ingrained prejudices. Here comes our meal!"

A bell sounded, the shaft door clicked open, and a tray lay in the orifice. Elizabeth carried it to the table, and a well-cooked meal was smoking before us.

"Arnold," began David, when the empty dishes and the plates with their remnants had been sent down the shaft, "let us go into the living-room. It has occurred to me that—perhaps I have been under a misunderstanding—in short, Arnold," he said, in a burst of confidence, "I found it difficult to believe that our civilization could be so entirely new to you. There is so much that you must know before the Council summons you.

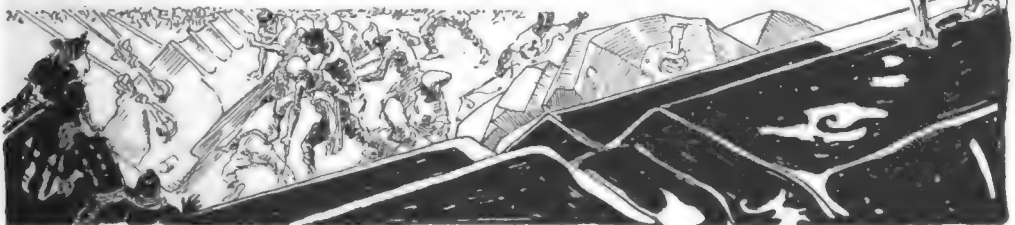
"Arnold," he began again, as we sat down, "you know there is a period of necessary constraint at present, owing to the final adjustment's being incomplete. There is still a dread that a reactionary spirit may show itself among our not wholly disciplined blues. Many of the older men remember the old régime. The Council is strict, and—

in short, Arnold, I am putting my safety in your hands because I trust you, and because I have had no chance to talk to an educated man for ages. And then you need to know so much. You must be primed, and well primed, before you face the Council. Arnold, some time I will receive your confidences, and then—well, we will understand each other. Why, Arnold," he continued, with a swift change of subject which I thought intentional, "do you know I think you can spend the remainder of your day very profitably learning to read!"

"Learn in a day?"

"To some extent. There are only thirty-five principal or key characters, and the sub-characters can be discerned readily when you have mastered these. I believe Elizabeth has an old spelling-book, and she will be delighted to instruct you."

The idea aroused his enthusiasm, and a few minutes later Elizabeth and I were seated at a table, poring over the book. By supper time I had already mastered the elements, and we continued to study afterward under the soft solar light which, issuing



from small, shaded, glass-covered apertures in the wall, made the room as bright as day.

Soon after dinner the dumb-waiter shaft door clicked open and disclosed a bulky package. David opened it. Inside was my overcoat.

At least, it was meant for me. But instead of the fine chevrot I discovered an abominable mixture of cotton and shoddy wool. Naturally, I was indignant.

David seemed surprised at my vehemence and laid his hand restrainingly upon my arm. "Is it worth while getting into difficulties with the Wool Boss before you go to the Council?" he asked.

He went on to explain that each industry was autonomous, and had its own boss, elected annually by the workers in theory, but for life in practise. The Wool Boss, like the other bosses, received five per cent. on the value of every article made by his department.

"At present our social organization is a little upset," he added. "When our foreign difficulties are ended, we shall resume our normal life. There will be more spaciousness, more freedom."

We went to bed early.

I mused so long that the solar light, which flooded the bedroom within and made London without a chiaroscuro in a black frame, was suddenly turned off, leaving me to grope my way into bed in the darkness. I lay thinking of Esther, who died so long ago, and I knew that when the first bewilderment of the new life had passed away my loss would seem as unbearable as before.

I thought of Elizabeth and the terrified look in her eyes; I heard a city clock strike ten, and, an hour after, one, and could not credit my ears until I remembered that ten was midnight. My last resolve was to forget the old life and fling myself with all my power into the new. Then I fell asleep, to be awakened by the sun shining into my eyes along a cañon that stretched between the high buildings as far as I could see.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Hidden Things

IT WAS not until a week had elapsed that the first stimulus of the life into which I had been plunged abated, leaving me a prey to melancholy reflections.

David and Elizabeth seemed to understand my feelings and tried to keep me from

brooding; but I could not help seeing that over them, too, some heavy grief or apprehension hung. And I felt that I was an intruder upon it. I would hear David pacing in his room at night for hours, and sometimes a groan seemed to be wrung from his lips. Yet his kindness toward me never failed, nor did he ever show his trouble in speech or actions.

There seemed to be no social life at all—at any rate, in the Strangers' House. The other inmates were lodged on different floors and ate in common, living under the guardianship of deputies who occasionally came up to confer with David.

And yet I knew that David had visitors after the solar lights went out. I would hear strangers going tiptoe along the passage, and whispered colloquies in David's room. Sometimes I fancied that Elizabeth shared in these. On such occasions I felt more than ever of an intruder. And always David seemed upon the point of unbosoming himself to me, and always checked himself, and the constraint deepened.

I was amazed and alarmed increasingly at what I saw in the course of my afternoon journeys about the town with David; the large brass tags that labeled every one, the occupation badges, the insolence of the white-clad men—a sort of nobility, it seemed, passing with body-guards of blues and shouldering every one out of the way. And once there came a frantic scramble to avoid a tall, black-bearded man in a uniform of dark blue, wearing a fez, who passed in the midst of his retinue.

I had noticed these men with the Moslem head-dress, striding like conquerors among a servile populace. I learned from David that the tall man was Mehemet, the captain of the Guard. More I could not elicit.

David had acquainted me with the historical events of the past hundred years, in reply to my guarded questions, the universal triumph of democratic principles after the great War of the Nations, the decay of representative government and the breaking down of authority, the unrestrained scramble for wealth and creation of world monopolies which left the masses first economically enslaved, then pauperized, and finally—after the fixing and utilization of solar energy—starving in the midst of the wealth they had created.

There followed the inevitable socialization of industries. The old order fell, not

because it became ridiculous, but because it was unworkable. It fell forever, in a world cataclysm that ushered in the millennial dreams of Socialism, and for a time life seemed instinct with a new hope fairer than the most daring dreams of the past. But with the destruction of half the cities of the globe, her art, her books, all the experiences accumulated by mankind in the science of government were also jettisoned. Futurism had come of age.

It was the discovery of the Glow Ray, or combustion by cold light, derived from stored solar energy, that placed a terrific weapon in the hands of the leaders of democracy, enabling them to perpetuate their power and stabilize the nations, torn by perpetual revolutionary strife. I learned that the glow paint on the public buildings was the only protection against the all-consuming potency of the Ray. By the knowledge of this secret Spain, which had withdrawn from the Federation of nations, had maintained her isolation.

Russia, the very last stronghold of the old order, refusing subservience to a mechanistic world, had withdrawn also, but possessing only the paint and not the Ray, her vast army was besieged in Tula, and its overthrow, expected daily, would obliterate the last impediment to the new civilization, open her wheat-fields to exploitation, and her labor to the Federation's factories.

Upon the ruins of dead faith the rule of Science had been founded. World councils had laid down the dogmas of universal knowledge in the famous Vienna Creed, amid scenes of violence culminating in murder.

The famous quarrel as to whether Force and Matter are of the same or of a similar substance had been decided in favor of the Sames, by a proclamation of the Federation Boss, whose decrees had come to be considered absolutely infallible in all matters of knowledge.

I learned that London was the Federal capital; that Boss Lembken and Doctor Sanson were at the head of the political

and scientific branches, respectively. It was Sanson who separated the race into whites and blues, the physically perfect whites laboring for the uplift of humanity, the ninety-five per cent. of blues contributing the manual labor. Much the same system existed in America, whose bosses, however, had not yet come into the Federation, though negotiations toward this end were still in progress.

"Who is this Sanson?" I inquired.

David looked at me, not in bewilderment but terror—at least so it seemed to me. He shot a glance toward the telephone funnel and cautiously moved his chair toward mine.

"Arnold," he said in a low tone, "he is a man of superhuman powers, as you will discern when you appear before the Council. He is more feared than any man was ever feared before. He is believed to be immortal, Arnold, and to have the power of reassuming his youth. And the people believe that he can bestow immortality upon them and overcome the last enemy, death. That is the secret of their terror of him."

He was speaking now in a whisper only.

"You have come at a critical time, Arnold," he said. "For popular expectancy has set a date, long ago. None knows how the rumor started, but within the next few months, 'soon after the Cold Solstice of 37,' the legend runs, a Messiah is to come to earth, ignorant of his destiny. When he learns it he will offer man his ancient liberties. Sanson will offer immortality in place of these, that men may become as gods. Then will ensue the most titanic of all struggles, and the issue is not known."

His voice quavered; and, staring at him, I realized that David was repeating no foolish, popular tale only, but one that he himself believed.

Science had not yet banished faith from the hearts of men. She had changed it to superstition instead. My brain reeled as the dreadful picture that David had drawn came home to me. A mechanistic world, with superstition added, was the inferno brought to earth.

The next instalment of "The Messiah of the Cylinder" will appear in the July number.



THE MESSIAH OF THE CYLINDER

By Victor Rousseau

ILLUSTRATED BY JOSEPH CLEMENT COLL

THIS is the second instalment of a startlingly original and powerful four-part serial that is different from anything ever published in this magazine. The story begins a short time before the outbreak of the great world war, and Arnold Pennell, who tells the story, is projected into the next century by means of a vacuum cylinder equipped with time-clocks set at a hundred years. The cylinder is the idea of Herman Lazaroff, a brilliant young materialist who looks forward to a scientific world freed of faith and humanitarianism. Lazaroff is associated in a biological laboratory with Arnold—and the two men are both in love with their chief's daughter, Esther. One evening Lazaroff takes the other two into a secret cellar to show them the three vacuum cylinders, in which, he professes, he means to seal up some monkeys and send them on a hundred years. By way of jest, he induces Arnold to enter one of the cylinders—and immediately the automatic cap shuts him in

When Arnold regains consciousness, he is in a desperate state of weakness and bewilderment; but he is able to struggle out of the opened cylinder. At length and the astounding truth dawns on him that he has been unconscious for a hundred years. He makes his way outside at last, and is presently seen by an aviator, who asks him

strange questions, and offers to carry him to London. This is a city he never dreamed of—buildings fifty stories high, all dazzling white, moving streets roofed with crystal, people strangely dressed. Arnold is conducted to the Strangers' House and placed in the care of David, the Strangers' guard, and his daughter Elizabeth. Gradually they explain to him this curious life he has entered. David tells him that most of the world is ruled by Science, that faith is dead, and that the Federation of Nations is dominated by two men—Boss Lembken and Doctor Sanson. Finally David confides to him the secret that the people are looking forward to the coming of a Messiah who will give back to man his ancient liberties.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Goddess of the Temple

“ARNOLD! Arnold!”

The telephone funnel between the rooms was calling me, not in its usual strident tones, but in a muffled, intimate appeal.

David was at the bureau, and Elizabeth had gone out on one of her infrequent journeys. It was as if the voice had guessed

I was alone, for it had never spoken to me before, and I had hardly even been alone before. I went to the funnel and listened.

"Arnold, I am your friend," the voice continued. "You are in the hands of enemies. You will come to no good in the Strangers' House. Go out quietly by the external elevator at once and proceed toward the Temple, where everything will be explained to you. Your friends are with you."

I went out of the apartment. I descended by the external elevator, and a moment later I was upon the moving street, feeling like a runaway schoolboy, and animated by an intense eagerness to solve the secrets which lay hidden from me.

Before I became aware of it I had drawn near to the domed building toward which the street was running. The houses suddenly dropped away, and the splendid structure, which had seemed to float with tantalizing elusiveness above the house-tops, revealed itself to me. I was half-way up a rather steep hill, whose superior portion consisted of a smooth glacié composed of neatly joined stones, across which the streets, converging, moved toward the castellated fortification that I had seen from the air-plane, each terminating before a gate in this wall.

The gate in front of me was composed of huge blocks of stone, probably laid on a steel frame, and swung upon hinges of some metal that must have possessed enormous tensile strength. It was open, and, like the fortifications and the great Ray guns mounted on them, was covered with glow paint or plaster, a dazzling mirror, now white, now blue, and bright as sunlight.

I passed through the gateway beneath a massive arch. Now I saw that the space of ninety feet between the outer and inner walls formed a narrow fortress surrounding the inner courtyard, and connecting with the domed building, as I had seen from aloft, by long bridges stretched upon arches. The court within was laid out in grass-plots and was most spacious.

As I stood still, amazed at the magnificent conception of the architect, suddenly I knew what the domed building was. It was St. Paul's Cathedral. I had not recognized it, for the cross was gone.

My wonder grew as I looked on it. Even of the old building I could see that the greater part was a restoration, but the dome

designed by Sir Christopher remained intact. Yet it no longer rested on the summit, but seemed to soar, supported on numerous low pillars; and twenty feet beneath it, on a flat under-roof, was a garden of luxuriant palm-trees, doubtless enclosed by invisible crystal walls. I saw the gorgeous coloring of tropical flowers, and scarlet creepers that twined round the gnarled trunks of trees. What a magnificent pleasure-ground for the Council of the Federated Provinces, high above the London streets in the January weather!

An elderly, bent man in blue, with the sign of a hammer upon his shoulder, came slowly toward me.

"Can one obtain a permit to go up to the Council garden?" I inquired of him.

He stopped and looked vacantly at me. "Eh?" he asked.

"I want to go up and see the aerial garden," I responded, pointing.

"You want to go up there?" he exclaimed, and then began to chuckle, and slapped first one knee and then the other. "Ho! ho!" he roared. "That's good! But listen! You don't know whom you're talking to. My daughter lives up there. I'll never see her again, but I like to walk here and look up and think of the good luck that came to us. It gives me standing. I've got to earn a hektone and a quarter minimum a month, haven't I? But I tell you I don't produce fifty ones a month, and I lay off when I want to, and there's not a Labor Boss dares say a word to me, for all my swank and pout. And down I go on the books for my hektone and a quarter monthly, as regular as the sun rises."

His hard, shrewd laughter convulsed him again, and he slapped his legs and leered up at me. He drew nearer. "You've heard this new freedom that the people are whispering about?" he asked, glancing apprehensively about him. "They're never satisfied, people aren't. They want to get back to the bad days a hundred years ago, when there wasn't food to go round, and the rich sucked the poor men dry. I've read about those days. But they've been forgotten too soon. Sanson will crush the people when the outbreak comes. I know those Christians. London's full of them to-day. The defectives' shops are full of them. They're talking and planning for an uprising to turn back the hands of the clock. But Sanson'll out them when he gets ready.



I SAW HER EYELIDS QUIVER AND HALF UNCLOSE AN INSTANT, AND, THOUGH THERE WAS NO OTHER SIGN OF AWAKENING, I KNEW SHE LIVED.

He'll send them to the Rest-Cure Home. They say there's a Messiah coming to mate the Temple goddess and bring back the old bad days. Do you know what Sanson means to do? He's going to mate her himself. And then he's going to make us immortal. We'll have our heaven and keep our bodies too. What's the use of a heaven if you haven't a body to enjoy it with?"

He stopped, and began scanning me shrewdly. "You're a stranger," he said with slow suspicion.

"Yes," I replied. "Now tell me how I can go up to the Council garden."

"Garden!" he repeated, as if stupefied. "Don't you know that's Boss Lembken's home? That's the People's House, where Boss Lembken lives. People can't go up there. Don't you know that's Boss Lembken's palace? Who are you?"

He started back and a malignant look came over his face. "You're a wipe!" he shrieked. "I know you now. You want to trap me and send me to the Comfortable Bedroom because you think I'm too old to work. And never a month passes but I produce my full hektone and a quarter! You want to switch an old man who minds

his own business and produces his hektone and a quarter, you rotten moron!"

His old face worked with excitement and fear, and he raised his fist in a threatening manner; then, suddenly changing his intention, he swung on his heel and hurried away toward the gate. I saw him glance back furtively as he made his way toward the street terminal.

As I turned to watch him I perceived that a small wooden gate on the interior side of the fortification stood open, and between the walls I saw a troop of the Moslem Guard in their dark-blue uniforms and red fezzes, drilling.

The man in blue with the machine badge on his shoulder, who was waiting for me at the entrance which I was approaching, surveyed me with a smile of tolerant amusement and considered no preliminary of introduction essential. He led me within the portico and through a swing-door on the north side of the building. I found myself within a circular chamber like a hospital theatre, with marble seats rising from the floor almost to the roof round a small central platform.

"This is the Vivisection Bureau," he began, taking his stand beside a table of reddish marble mottled with blue veins, with a shallow, cup-like depression at the head. Beside this table stood a mechanism consisting of a steel framework from which a number of powerful clasps extended above the table surface.

"The people call this, jocularly, of course, the Rest-Cure Home," my guide continued. "You can guess why. A number of criminals and other suitable subjects for experimentation are always on hand. Doctor Sanson is said to be making investigations which will prove of a revolutionary nature. Experimental operations are also performed here, for the supply of moron children is fortunately adequate."

Through the glass of the door I perceived a large throng pouring into another part of the building, following in the wake of an old man, perhaps eighty years of age, who was being conducted by two Moslem guards. Behind him trailed a little rat-faced fellow, who glanced furtively to the right and left and wore an uneasy smile. We accompanied the crowd into the next chamber.

It was about the size of the first, and in the center was a large structure of steel, with a swing-door. The brass rail that sur-

rounded this held back the spectators, who lined it, staring and uttering exclamations of suspense and interest. The room was filled with the stench of an anesthetic.

One of the guards raised a drop-bar in the rail, and the old man passed through and walked with firm steps toward the steel structure. His white beard drifted over his breast, his blue eyes were fixed hard, and he had the poise of perfect courage. At the door he turned and spoke to the spectators.

"It's a bad world, and I am glad to go," he said. "I remember when the world was Christian. It was a better world then."

He passed through, and as the door opened the anesthetic fumes became intensified. I heard a creak, as of a chair, inside the structure, a whisper, a sigh, and the soft, dabbing sound of a wet sponge. That was all, and the mob, struck silent, began to shuffle, and then to sigh. I saw the rat-faced man slinking away.

"This," said my guide, "is popularly called the Comfortable Bedroom. The old man can no longer produce his hektone and a quarter monthly, and his grandson, who has the right to take over his burden on a very liberal extended credit system, has just been mated. Most of our old qualify for pensions, but no doubt he dissipated his credit margin and ran into debt when he was younger."

I could endure the fellow no longer. I broke from him and forced my passage through the crowd. I ran on through hall after hall, approaching the central part of the building, until I found my way blocked by a crowd of young men and women in blue, who were reading a lengthy list of numbers, printed in huge figures, and suspended high above their heads. Most of the young people were in pairs, and as they read they nudged each other and exchanged facetious phrases.

But one couple I saw who, with clasped hands, turned wretchedly away and passed back slowly toward the entrance.

"This is more cheerful than the Comfortable Bedroom," murmured a voice at my side.

This speaker was a dapper young fellow with a small, pert mustache and an air of familiarity. He placed his hand upon my arm to detain me as I started to move away.

"The kindly Council, which relieves old age of the burden of life, also provides that

the life to come shall be as effective as possible," he said. "I see you are a stranger, and perhaps you do not know that these young people are here to learn the numbers of their mates."

"Do you mean that the Council decides whom each man or woman is to marry?" I asked.

"To mate!" he corrected. "Not in all cases. There is no mating for one-fourth of the population—that is to say, those of the morons who are just intelligent enough to be permitted to reach maturity. Grade 2, the ordinary defectives, who number another fourth of the populace, are at present mated, though Doctor Sanson will, it is believed, soon abolish this practise. The sexes of this division are united in accordance with their Sanson rating, with a view to the production of a perfect race."

"And these are defectives of what you call Grade 2?"

"No; all these are Grade 1 defectives," he answered, regarding me with a smile of amusement. "These comprise twenty-five per cent. of the population. This is the average type of the race, to which, presumably, we both belong. Whereas Grade 2 have their partners provided for them and are bound in strict monogamy, unhappy beings, they are free to choose within certain limits. The Council provides periodically a list of young men and women in each district who are physically and mentally adapted to each other, and those on one side of the list may mate any of those on the other side. Monogamy is not considered an essential feature of this system—in fact, it is frowned upon."

A rush of people toward the next hall carried us apart, and, not loath to lose my companion, I followed the crowd, to find myself in an immense auditorium, within which various orators were addressing the assemblage from various platforms.

Upon that nearest me a lecturer was holding forth with the enthusiasm of some Dominican of old.

"Produce! Produce!" he screamed, smashing his fist into his palm. "Out with the unproductive who can not create a hektone and a quarter monthly! Out with the moron! Out with the defective! Out with the unadaptable! Out with the weak! Out with the heretic who denies the constancy of Force and Matter! No compromise! Sterilize, sterilize, as Doctor

Sanson demands of you! There are defectives in the shops to-day, spreading the pestilential Christian superstition—yes, and even under white robes, both men and women, bearing the burden of the physical ills that they have concealed so cunningly. There are bow-legs, there are asymmetries, variations from the Sanson norm, legacies of malformations from degenerate ancestors, producing offspring in their own likeness. There are hæmophiliacs and the color-blind who have escaped the test, defectives wrongly rated upon the Binet board. Let us increase the rigidity of all tests, citizens! Sterilize ruthlessly, go through the populace with sickle and pruning-hook! Praise Sanson and the perfect race that is to come! Praise Boss Lembken!"

"Will you not go up and see the Temple goddess?" whispered a voice in my ear. I looked round, but I could not discover the speaker. I looked up. On each side of the auditorium a high stairway of gleaming marble led to a gallery. Doors were set in its walls in many places, and above were more stairs and more galleries, tier above tier. At the head of each stairway a Moslem guard was posted. He stood there in evident disdain of the blue-clad multitude beneath, splendidly picturesque in his darker blue, with the red fez that made a splotch of color against the white marble wall.

"Go up and ask no questions," whispered somebody upon my other side; and I turned again, but could not discover the speaker.

I went up the stairway nearest me, passing the guard, who did not question me. As I halted in the gallery above the auditorium a door opened, and there came out a man of incredible old age, dressed in white, with a gold ant-badger on either shoulder. He propped himself upon a staff and stood blinking and leering at me, and wagging his head like a grotesque idol.

"A stranger!" he exclaimed. "So you have come to see the goddess of the Ant Temple! Would you like to stand on the altar platform and see her face to face? It only costs one hektone, though it is customary to offer a gratuity to the assistant priest."

I thrust the money into the trembling hand that he stretched out to me.

The old man preceded me into a chamber on the south side of the auditorium, beyond which I saw another door. This room in

which I stood was evidently the priests' robing-room, for white garments with the gold ant-badge hung from the walls, which were covered with mirrors, in each of which the horrible old face grimaced at me.

"You are to go through that door," said the old man, pointing to the far end of the room. "But wait!"—for I was hastening toward the door. "You must put on a priest's robes. It is not licit for a stranger to look upon the goddess."

He indicated a white robe with the ant-badge that hung on the wall beside me.

"What is this Temple?" I inquired. "Do men worship an ant, and are you its priest?"

He chuckled and leered at me. "Oh, no. I am a very humble old man," he answered. "I am as humble as the Christian priests used to be. I am only an assistant priest. Boss Lembken is the Chief Priest. So you ask about the ant. The people worship it, but it is not known whether they see it as a symbol of humanity's ideal or whether they think it is a god. The religious ideas of the people were always a confused and chaotic jumble, even in the old days of Christianity."

"I remember Christianity well. In my young days it was a power. I used to go to church," he cackled. "But already, when I was a young man, only the intellectuals believed in Christianity any more. Once it had been the masses. But Haeckel had proved that there was nothing but Matter, and the momentum of the materialistic impulses swamped the reviving superstition. And then the aristocrats had made Christianity a social organization. They set up little rival bodies because of pride, and because they wanted different forms of church government, when Christ prayed for them to be one. After the Revolution, Christianity continued to be taught among the other myths. But it aroused antisocial instincts. Christians were the enemies of humanity. They used to go into the Rest-Cure Home and ask to be vivisected in place of the wretched morons there. You can't build up a civilization with people like that. So the belief was made a capital offense. That

was after we burned the bishops."

"What!" I cried.

"Death by burning came to us from the great transatlantic de-

mocracy, you know," he said, leering at me again. "Europe had forgotten it. But we set up the stakes once more. I saw the Archbishops of Tremont, of York, and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster burned side by side in the ruins of Westminster Hall. Then there was Bonham of London, and Bethany of Manchester, and Dean Cross of Chichester; we put them in plaster of Paris and unslaked lime first and then into the fagots. The morons could have fled to Skandogermania, which was not free then. But they went, all three, into the Council Hall, and preached to the Council. So they had to go. And they blessed us while their bones were crackling. You can't make a progressive people out of morons like that!"

I went toward the door. I pushed it open and it swung noiselessly behind me.

Within the vastness of the Temple I heard a murmur rise, a wail of misery that made the ensuing silence more dreadful still. For now I encountered only thick gloom and emptiness, and soundless space, as though some veil of awful silence had been drawn before the tabernacle of an evil god. My limbs trembled as I advanced, clutching the rail beside me.

I found myself upon a slender bridge that seemed to span the vault, widening in the center to a small, square, stone-paved enclosure, like a flat altar-top, surrounded by a close-wrought grille that gleamed like gold. I halted here and, looking down, saw far beneath me a throng of people whose white faces stared upward. Again that chant arose, and now I heard its burden:

"We are immortal in the germ-plasm: make us immortal in the body before we die."

Then something beneath me began to assume shape as my eyes grew used to the obscurity. It was an enormous ant of gold, five hundred tons of it, perhaps, erected on a huge pedestal of gold; where should have been the altar of the Saviour of the world, there the abominable insect crawled, with its articulated, smooth body, and one antenna upraised.

The symbol was graven clear. This was the aspiration of mankind, and to this we had come, through Science devoid of faith, and the progressive aims of ethical doctrinaires that had discarded the old safeguards, Christ's light yoke of well-tried moral laws,



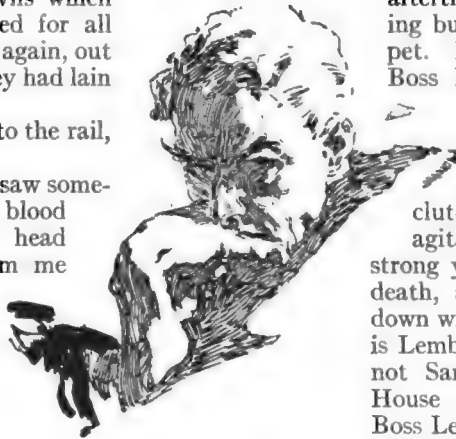
sufficient to centuries; through all the fanatical votaries of a mechanistic world; polygamy and mutilation, and all the shameful things from which the race had struggled upward. All the old evils which we had thought exorcised for all time had crept in on us again, out of the shadows where they had lain concealed.

I stood there, clinging to the rail, sick with horror.

Then I looked up and saw something that sent the blood throbbing through my head and drew my voice from me in gasping sobs.

At the edge of the platform on which I stood, out of the gloom loomed the round body of the second cylinder. And inside, through the unbroken face of glass, I saw the sleeping face of Esther, my love of a hundred years ago.

And the cap of the cylinder was half unscrewed.



you understand? Sanson is working on the problem of immortality, and soon he will himself be proven mortal. Except, of course, in the germ-plasm," he added, in afterthought. "Sanson is nothing but Boss Lembken's puppet. Don't you know it is Boss Lembken who is your friend?"

"No," I answered contemptuously.

The old man clutched me in extreme agitation. "If you are headstrong you will go to ruin and death, and drag your friends down with you," he cried. "It is Lembken who is your friend, not Sanson. The People's House is above the Temple. Boss Lembken lives there. He has a beautiful palace, full of

flowers and lovely girls. You will be happy there. Sanson only lives above the Science wing, where he experiments with the morons. He has no palace, no comforts at all. They say he has only a single room. So you will not wish to go to Sanson. But we must be cautious, and if he is in the Council Hall we must wait till he is gone, for he controls the guard, and if he saw you he would seize you. That is why I gave you a priest's robes—because Lembken is the Chief Priest, and the guard dares not stop the priests. Come with me!"

I accompanied him out into the gallery above the auditorium. We mounted the marble stairway, the Moslem soldiers making no attempt to stop us. There were two at the head of each flight, each armed with a truncheon similar to those that I had seen in the cellar, and they raised these weapons in salute.

We ascended several flights, and always the two guards saluted us and stepped aside. We passed across a small covered bridge, and presently came upon a little rotunda, in which sat a dozen of the guard, sipping coffee and chatting in low tones. Behind them was an immensely high door, marked COUNCIL HALL in Roman characters.

We did not enter this, but a lower door on the right, and at the entrance the priest paused and whispered to me: "You must be perfectly silent. If Sanson is in Council he must not hear us."

I found myself in a narrow, long room,

CHAPTER NINE

The Lords of Misrule

I SAW her eyelids quiver and half unclosed an instant, and, though there was no other sign of awakening upon the mask-like face of sleep, I knew she lived. The indicators upon the dials showed that five days remained before the cylinder-cap would fly off.

As I stared through the glass plate, so horror-struck and shaken, some power seemed to take possession of me and make me very calm. An immense elation succeeded fear and rendered it impotent. Esther was to be restored to me. We had not slept during that entire century to be lost to each other now. All the love in my heart surged up triumphant, and this new world seemed as fantasmal as a dream.

With steady steps I returned to the priests' room. The dotard was waiting for me, and, blinking into my face, he searched my soul with eyes as hard as agates.

"I am going to Sanson," I said calmly.

He started and looked at me in terror. He seized me by the arm. "No, no, no!" he exclaimed. "You are to go to your friends! Sanson is not your friend! Don't

with the inevitable door at the farther end. Upon one side were two apertures in the wall, covered with glass—spyholes, looking like the port-holes of a ship, but each no larger than the crown of a very small hat. The priest stooped down before one and I followed suit, looking through the other into the Council Hall.

The immense hall was dim, and it took some time before my eyes grew accustomed to the obscurity. Then I saw that at the farther end was a raised platform, on which were placed two high chairs, like thrones.

There were three men upon the platform, one occupying each chair, and the third standing.

One was Lembken, the obese old boss of the Federation. He wore a trailing gown of white, with a short mull cape about his shoulders, and golden figures, which I discovered subsequently to be ants, stamped all over the fabric. He was lying, rather than sitting, with his feet resting upon a stool, and he was stout to the verge of disease. I could not see his face distinctly.

Upon the second throne sat a man with a fanatic's face and a square beard of black that swept his breast. He had a large ant-badger on either shoulder of his white gown, and on one finger a golden ring with an immense stone that projected beyond his knuckles. I surmised that he was the Deputy Chief Priest, Lembken holding the titular dignity only, as Julius Cæsar held the formal office of Chief Pontiff.

Standing in the shadows between the two, lolling half insolently against Boss Lembken's chair, to whisper in his ear, and again turning to the priest, was Sanson. He wore a tight tunic of white, without a badge, and he bore himself with a complete absence of self-consciousness. There was no trace of pose in the completeness of that manifested personality; the man lived altogether in action, and the alert poise, cat-like and tense, showed that each nerve and sinew had been disciplined to obey the master-soul within.

A strident, metallic voice began calling loudly somewhere in the chamber: "Wait till the goddess awakens and the Messiah comes! He'll make an end of Sanson and his cruelties and give us liberty again."

Now I perceived that behind Sanson and between the two thrones stood a telephone funnel, attached to some mechanism. It was from this the voice had come. It was

followed by the clacking sound of a ribbon of paper being run off a reel. Sanson stepped back, picked up the ribbon, and ran it through his fingers, glancing at it indifferently.

"The speaker lives in Sub-District 9, Block 7, but we do not yet know his number. A trapper is watching there," the voice in the funnel continued.

A bell rang, the door on the left of the Council Hall was opened by a guard, and a girl of about eighteen years entered. She was robed in white and on her shoulder was the sign of a palm-tree. She stood before Boss Lembken's throne with downcast face and clasped hands. I saw her tremble violently.

"They told me to come here," she said in a low tone.

I saw a smile break over Lembken's face. He looked at her for a few seconds; then he shifted each foot down from the stool and gathered himself, puffing, upon his feet. He put his hand under her chin, raised it, and examined her face. The child twisted herself away, screamed, and began running toward the door.

"Let me go home! Please—please," she cried.

The guard at the door placed one hand over her mouth and dragged her, struggling, through a small door behind the funnel, which I had not perceived.

"Ascribe the heretics," said Lembken to the deputy priest, and puffed out behind the guard.

Sanson stepped backward and started the funnel mechanism, which instantly began to scream. "Heresy in the paper shops!" it howled. "Examine District 5. They say there is a God. Weed out the morons there!"

Again the bell tinkled and there came in a man of about thirty years, in blue, leading a little boy by the hand. He looked about him in bewilderment, and then, seeing the priest, flung himself upon his knees and pressed his lips to the hem of his robe.

"It is not true that I am a heretic," he began to babble. "I believe in Science Supreme and Force and Matter, coexistent and consubstantial. No God, no Christ, no soul. I believe in the Vienna Creed, and in the Boss, the keeper of Knowledge; that man dies as the beast dies, and that we are immortal in the germ-plasm, through our descendants. I believe in Darwin,

Haeckel, Nietzsche, Mendel, and Tapp, who brought us to enlightenment——”

“That boy is a moron!” cried Sanson, interrupting this parrot-rote by leaping from his chair. He dragged the screaming boy from the father and carried him toward a window. He set him down and peered into his face; he took the head between his hands and examined it. His expression was transformed by cruelty; he looked like a madman. And then I realized that the man was really mad: a madman ruled the world, as in the reign of Caligula.

The father crept humbly toward Sanson, shaking pitiably. “He is a Grade 2 defective,” he whispered hoarsely. “You don’t take Grade 2 from the parents. He is Grade 2—Grade 2—Grade 2——” He repeated the phrase over and over again, standing with hands clasped and staring eyes.

“I tell you he is a moron!” Sanson shouted. “The doctors were fools to pass him. He is a brach. Look at that angle and that index! Look at the cranium, asymmetrical here—and here! The fingers flex too far apart, a proof of deficiency. The ears project at differing angles, my eighth stigma of degeneracy. He is a low-grade moron, and must go——”

With a passionate, unhuman scream the father leaped at Sanson and flung him to the ground, snatched up the boy in his arms, and began running toward the door. From his throne the priest watched the scene impassively. A guard appeared. But before the man had reached the door Sanson had leaped to his feet and pulled a truncheon from his tunic. He pointed it. I heard the catch click up. A stream of blinding, purple-white light flashed forth. I heard the carpet rip as though a sword had slashed it. A chip of wood flew high into the air. On the floor lay a charred, unrecognizable body.

I confess fear was my dominant feeling then. How could I confront those devils in their hell, Sanson or Lembken, when, for Esther’s sake, I must be cautious and wise? I plunged frantically toward the farther door. The priest caught at me, but I shook him off and flung him, stunned, to the floor. I opened the door and rushed outside.

I was amazed to find myself upon a long, slender bridge that spanned the central interior court of the vast mass. I stopped, bewildered, not knowing which way to turn.

and the whole scene burned itself upon my brain instantaneously.

The entire mass was divided into four separate buildings. That from which I emerged—the Council Hall—was on the south side, and, looking beyond it, I saw the Thames winding, a silver ribbon in the distance. Facing me was the north wing, which I had entered, containing the Vivisection Bureau and other halls of nameless horrors, Sanson’s headquarters. On my left hand stood the Temple, towering high above me. Over my head I saw the outlines of the noble dome, and the palm-trees behind their crystal walls. A blood-red creeper trailed through a chink above me.

Upon my right was a massive fortress which I had not hitherto perceived, anchored above which was a whole fleet of air-ships, evidently the same that I had seen when I entered London. There must have been more than a hundred of them, ranging from tiny scout-planes to huge monsters with glow shields round them and projecting conical ray-guns within. On their prows were jaws of steel, in some cases closed, in others open, fifteen feet of projecting jaw and mandible, capable, as it looked, of crushing steel plate like eggshell.

The bridge on which I stood ran from the Council Hall to the wing where Sanson dwelt. A bridge from the Temple building ran straight to the fortress of the air-ships at right angles to this, crossing it in the center. At various places bridges from the Moslem fort that encircled everything crossed the court and entered the pile of buildings, radiating like the spokes of a wheel. And the whole concept was most beautiful.

I did not know whither to turn. In front of me, where the bridge entered the Sanson wing, a Moslem guard stood watching me. As I crossed the central space where the two bridges met, he raised his truncheon and aimed it at me.

I turned toward the right. Here, where the bridge from the Temple entered the fort of the air-ships, I saw an air-scout in blue, with the white swan on his breast, watching me. Again I stopped. My mind was awl with the horrors that I had seen; I could not think; I did not know what to do.

Beneath me lay the court, a broad expanse of white, inlaid with geometrical figures of grass. On it crawled tiny figures in blue. I was half-way between the court

below and the Temple dome above; yet everything was so still that the voices of those upon the flags floated up to me.

A group of men and women had gathered, chattering excitedly, around something that lay hard by the Temple entrance. As they moved this way and that, I saw that it had been a woman. She had been young; her garments had been white; there was a golden palm on a torn-off fragment of cloth that a gust of wind drove up toward me. I caught at it, but it went sailing past and fluttered down the breeze into the central court between the buildings.

I saw the spectators looking up toward the aerial gardens. The blood-red creeping vine now swung from an open crystal door. It clashed to and reopened as the wind caught it. It seemed to clang rhythmically, like a tocsin, high up beneath the dome, a bell of doom to warn the blood-stained city. Again it sounded like a workman's hammer; and the silence that covered everything made the sounds ominous and dreadful, as though fate hammered out the minutes that remained before she slashed her thread.

An old man pushed his way through the gathering crowd. He peered into the white face, and wrung his hands, and wept, and his voice rose in a high, penetrating wail.

"It's all over," I heard him cry. "I can't work now. I can't make up my time. I've spent my credit margin. I'm old and done with. I'll have to go to the Comfortable Bedroom."

It was the old man whom I had seen earlier in the day. The crowd jeered and pressed forward, those who were behind craning their necks and rising on their toes to see the spectacles of death and grief. The old man shook his gnarled fist at his dead daughter.

"You've killed me," he sobbed wildly. "Why couldn't you stay up there till Sanson had made us all immortal? I'm going to the Comfortable Bedroom now, and my body will die like a beast's, and I'll be ended."

And he broke into blasphemies and atrocious curses, while the crowd screamed with delight and mocked his passion.

The little gate on the interior side of the fortress opened, and a troop of Moslem soldiery emerged, bearing a stretcher. At the sight of them the mob scuttled into the shelter of the portico, and the old man

hastened away. Reverently the Moham-medans raised the body upon the canvas and carried it within the gate. One began scattering sand.

Out of the crowd leaped an old man with flowing hair and beard. He stood in the court and shook his fist at the Temple dome. "Wo to you, accursed city!" he screamed. "Wo to you in the day of judgment! Wo to your whites and harlots when the judgment comes!"

The crystal door banged and clashed open. A woman in white put out her hand and closed it. A latch-click pricked the air. The sun gilded the dome and turned it to a ball of fire. Down in the court the madman cried unceasingly.

CHAPTER TEN

The Palace of Palms

I TURNED to the right across the bridge that led toward the fortress. The sentinel stood still and watched me. He raised his truncheon, not to fire, but to salute me; then the weapon shook in his hand, and the fear on his face matched the astonishment on mine. For I recognized the man Jones, who had carried me to London in his air-plane less than three weeks before.

The door behind him opened and there stepped out a man of about fifty years, dressed in white, with a golden swan on each shoulder. Jones stepped aside and saluted him with his truncheon. The newcomer approached me; his hard, clean-shaven face was as impenetrable as a mask, and his eyes burned with a dull fire. Then a second figure emerged from the door. It was the old priest whom I had flung down and stunned in the Council ante-room.

"There he is! Seize him!" he shrieked.

The first man placed his hand courteously upon my shoulder. "I am Air-Admiral Hancock," he said. "You are to accompany me to Boss Lembken."

I went with him across the bridge into a doorway set in the west side of the Temple building. I expected again to see the vast interior beneath me, but we entered a narrow corridor and stepped into a small automatic elevator. In a moment we had shot up and halted inside the palace entrance. Hancock opened the door of the cage.

We were standing in a spacious hall,

bare, save for the hanging tapestries and heavy Persian rugs on the mosaic floor. It was half dark, and there was an all-pervading perfume that made my head swim. Before the curtained aperture opposite us stood a negro boy with a truncheon in his hand. As we approached he threw the curtain aside and stepped back.

At first I could see nothing. Then gradually the outlines of the room came into sight. There were low divans and rugs, and mirrors on every wall manifolded them.

I heard a rasping sound, and a blotch of crimson and green became a brilliant, silent macaw that scraped its way with its sharp claws from end to end of a horizontal perch. Behind it I now saw the white gleam of Lembken's robe; then the couch upon which he lay; then the girl who crouched, fanning him, at his feet; then the rotund form of the old man, the sharp eyes and the heavy jawl with the pendulous cheeks.

"I have executed your orders," said the Air-Admiral.

The old boss rose upon his feet heavily and came puffing up to me. His heavy hands, soft as a woman's, wandered about my robes, patting me here and there, while he puffed and snorted like some sea monster.

"You haven't a knife or a ray-rod?" he inquired suspiciously. "You haven't anything to harm me? I am an old, weak man. I am the people's friend, and yet many want to kill me."

He satisfied himself with the result of his inspection, and withdrew to his couch, picking up a ray-rod, which I now understood to be the name of the truncheon with which the guards were armed, and resting it across his knee.

Hancock withdrew at his signal, and he dismissed the girl. She rose to her feet briskly, smiling; she was about twenty years of age, dark-haired, beautiful, so far as I could discern; but there was a cruelty about her mouth that shocked me, and the soul behind that mask of youth seemed centuries old.

"Amaranth wanted to stay, to hear what I was going to say to you," said Lembken, "but I make everybody mind his own business in the People's House. Besides, she might have fallen in love with you. I like to have good-looking people about me." He looked at me and at the ray-rod, and then at me again; and then, with a petulant

gesture, he sent the weapon flying across the room.

"There! You see I trust you!" he exclaimed, smiling. "Sit down beside me. We understand each other, so we will be frank. Men such as we are above petty deceptions. You ought to be about a hundred and thirty years old."

He spoke jocularly, and yet I could see that he was anxious to assure himself I was the man he sought. Evidently he knew my history. When I acquiesced he heaved a sigh of immense satisfaction.

"I was not sure it was you," he said. "One has to be cautious when so much depends on it. And Sanson was beginning to suspect. What do you think of his Rest-Cure and his Comfortable Bedroom? I wanted you to understand his mind. They are his inventions, not mine, you know."

"I think he is Satan himself," I answered. And then, recalling what I had witnessed in the Council Hall before Lembken left it, I was not sure that I preferred this perfumed degenerate to Sanson, with all his maniac cruelty.

Lembken placed his hand on my shoulder, and a pleased smile crept upon his flabby face.

"Sanson doesn't see that he has embittered the people," he said. "He is harring them with all his laws, and they blame me for them. Now there is Hancock. He is a Christian and ought to go to the defectives' shops, according to the law Sanson made. But I don't care. I would just as soon have Christianity as the Ant, or Mormonism, as they have in America. I don't like tyranny. If I had my own way every one would be perfectly free. I am the people's friend."

With a sudden hoarse scream the macaw flew from her bar and perched on Lembken's shoulder, where she sat, preening her plumage and croaking viciously at me. "The people's friend," she cried, and broke into choking laughter.

"Yes, Sanson is really deplorably ignorant of human nature," he continued. "Sanson is crushing his own head with his ridiculous laws. The people will revolt some day and then they'll blame me too, and perhaps I'll have to abdicate. So you see it is entirely to your interest to join me and not Sanson. Reasonable men are actuated entirely by self-interest. Come, let me look at you again!"



OUT OF THE CROWD LEAPED AN OLD MAN WITH FLOWING HAIR AND BEARD. HE STOOD IN THE COURT AND SHOOK HIS FIST AT THE TEMPLE DOME.



"WO TO YOU, ACCURSED CITY!" HE SCREAMED. "WO TO YOU IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT!
WO TO YOUR WHITES AND HARLOTS WHEN THE JUDGMENT COMES!"

He touched a button, and suddenly the room was illuminated with a blaze of solar light. The golden ants leaped out upon his white robes. Lembken turned heavily on the divan and stared into my face.

"Yes, I can trust you," he said. "Well, Sanson will learn his mistake very shortly. And you shall live here among my whites and lead a life of pleasure. You will not need to think about the world below. We do exactly what we please: that is my rule here in the People's House."

"The People's House!" screamed the macaw, leaving Lembken's shoulder and fluttering back to her perch, from which she surveyed me coldly, her head upon one side. "The People's House! The people's friend!" she alternated, in a muttering diminuendo that gradually became inarticulate.

"My head aches to-day," said Lembken petulantly. "That is why I am sitting here in the dark. There has been an accident: one of our ladies fell through an open door and was killed. It made my head ache. I hate to see beautiful people die. So we will talk to-morrow," Lembken continued. "And for the present you are one of us. Come, I will show you the gardens."

He gave me his arm like an old friend, and with a fascinating, gracious manner that half deluded me: I could understand now how Lembken had won his way to power. The nature of the man, warped and rotten though it was, had in it that charm which the ancients called the gift of the gods. There was good-fellowship, there was discernment and culture and high-bred tolerance: and, more than that, there was a corrupting candor that seemed to strike its deadly roots down into my moral nature and shrivel it.

We passed out. The palace was all level with the Temple roof; there were no steps anywhere. We turned an angle of the building, and I stopped short and stared in involuntary admiration at the scene before me.

We might have stepped into the heart of some Amazonian forest, for we were in a tangled wilderness of palms and other tropical trees. The air was fragrant with the scent of orange-blossoms, and in a grove near by clusters of the bright fruit hung from the weighted boughs. From the dank earth sprang clusters of exotic flowers and ferns. Huge vines knotted themselves

around the trunks of the old trees, through whose recesses flew flocks of birds with brilliant plumage. The path was nothing but a trail, meandering between the trees and crossing rushing brooklets. The vast concavity of the dome above was like an arched heaven of blue, studded with golden stars.

"What do you think of the People's House?" inquired Lembken, turning toward me.

"It is a paradise!" I exclaimed. "It would make a man wish to live a thousand years."

He frowned, and then I was amazed to see two tears fall from his eyes. It was the same strange emotionalism that I had discerned before. So might Nero have wept at the sweet sounds he struck from his violin.

"It is the reward of those who are the chosen of the land," he answered. "It will be your reward, Arnold. You must dream over this to-night, and to-morrow we will sign our compact. I have reserved quarters for you. You will meet none of my friends. That is the chief charm of the People's House: we meet by agreement for our festivities; otherwise we see no one."

I felt my scruples vanishing. A deadly inertia of the spirit held me. Esther, my love of a hundred years, became an elusive memory. The sensuous appeal of this wonderworld swept over me, and in heart I was almost one with Lembken.

We had threaded the recesses of the groves, passing secluded arbors of twisted vines, pergolas, rustic cottages about which clung the scarlet trumpets of pomegranate petals. Now the crystal walls came into sight again, and, as we approached, a gust of wind blew open a door, the same one that, having opened to death that afternoon, opened again now, to divert my senses from their soul-destroying dominance. For, with the opening of that door, there came the voices of a multitude below, and, above them, faint but clear, the wild, prophetic accents of the whitebeard who had denounced the pleasure-palace that afternoon:

"Wo to you, London, when your whitecoats sit with their harlots in the high places! Wo! Wo!"

Lembken put out his hand and closed the door, cutting off the voices as if an ax had fallen upon the necks of the multitude. His brow remained serene; I realized his

contempt for the mob upon whose backs he had risen. He led me across a little shelving lawn, through a small gateway. There was nobody in the tiny close, which was surrounded on every side by a high wall. There were no windows in the small, squat house before me, cut off on each side from the surrounding buildings. It might have held two rooms.

"Three rooms," said Lembken, as if he had read my thoughts. "Open the third door quietly; there is a surprise for you there. Good night, Arnold. We do what we like in the People's House. There are no laws, no bonds. Dream of this paradise of yours, and do not think of the morrow."

He left me at the door. I opened it and went in.

The first room was a bedroom, furnished in the conventional style which had not changed appreciably since the last century. It was in ebony and teak, and luxurious beyond conception. The floor was covered with a thick-piled Bokhara rug of exquisite coloring.

The second room was fitted as a combination library and dining-room. There was an ebony bookcase with books magnificently bound; a sideboard on which stood bottles of wine and distilled liquors. A heavy dining-table, with a side flap let down, stood over a small square trap-door, presumably connecting with a kitchen below.

This room had windows, and, pausing to look out, I was surprised to see beneath me the bridge that led to the Air-scouts' Fortress, and, at the end of it, a figure in blue, the white swan on the breast brilliant in the reflection of the solar light over his head, within the entrance.

I passed on. But instead of the inevitable swing-door the further wall contained a door of heavy, iron-bound wood, with bolts of steel. I remembered Lembken's words: "Open the third door quietly."

My heart was hammering unaccountably. I felt that I was upon the verge of something tremendous. With shaking fingers I pushed back the bolts, which moved in their sockets with hardly a sound. I passed into a tiny chamber, bare, save for a divan and a strip of rug on the floor.

A girl in white, with the palm badge upon her shoulder, stood in the center. The room had been dark; the sudden glare of solar light from the dining-room which illumined it showed me the pallid face and

blazing eyes of her whom I had least thought to see before me—Elizabeth!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The House on the Wall

SHE stared at me with eyes that seemed to see nothing; then a look of recognition came into them, and a twitching smile upon her lips. She put her arms out and came, moving unsteadily, toward me. She threw her right arm out and backward. I caught her by the hand as it swung toward me, and a dagger's edge grazed my shoulder.

The next moment she was fighting like a trapped wildcat. I could not have imagined that such strength and fierceness existed in any woman. She twisted her wrists out of my grasp time and again, and we wrestled for the dagger till the blood from my slashed fingers dripped over my priest's robes. Each of the stabbing blows she dealt so wildly would have pierced me through if well directed.

I grappled with her, secured her right arm, and forced it upward; but we swayed to and fro for nearly a minute before I mastered her. Even then she had one last surprise in store, for, when she saw that she was beaten, she drew the dagger quickly backward, and I seized the point of the blade within two inches of her own breast. I forced her fingers open, and the steel fell to the floor. Then she wrested herself away and crouched in a far corner, silent, watching me as a trapped animal at bay watches its captor. Her gasping breathing was the only sound in the room.

"Elizabeth!" I cried, when I could gain my voice. "I am not here to harm you. Look at me; listen to me."

Her dark eyes were fixed on my face in a frenzy of terror that precluded speech. How she watched me! Only once did her glance waver, and that was toward the dagger upon the floor. I kicked it backward with my heel.

"Elizabeth! Listen to me!" I implored her. "I did not know that you were here, and I know nothing of the circumstances that brought you here. I want to help you. I want to take you home to David."

"Ah!" she began, shuddering. "This is what you whites call a romance in the style of the first century B.C., a fashionable pastime: to dress yourselves as blues or grays and worm your way into the homes of



I SWUNG AT THE LADDER'S END BY MY HANDS ONLY, MAKING GREAT TRANSVERSE SWEEPS,
LIKE THE WEIGHT AT THE BOTTOM OF A PENDULUM.

your prospective victims, in order to study them, and see whether they suit your taste and are worth adding to your collections. I have read of such things in the Council factory novels. But there was never any romance in them to me. So I appear to have suited you, after my father took you so confidently into our home? You deceived him, but you never deceived me."

I saw her eyes turn stealthily toward the dagger again.

"Come, Elizabeth, you are talking nonsense," I said, with an affectation of brusqueness. "Let us sit down in the next room and discuss this. I propose a compact: you shall take the dagger, provided you do not attempt to harm yourself till I have finished speaking. Is that agreed?"

She nodded after scrutinizing me for a full half-minute, and I preceded her into the library with an affectation of indifference that I was far from feeling, for I heard her stoop to pick up the dagger, and wondered each instant whether I was about to feel the point between my shoulders. However, my confidence seemed to inspire her with a measure of faith, for she followed me into the middle room and sat down on a chair at my indication.

Then I told her the events of the day, so far as I was concerned. I saw her incredulity vanish. She believed me at last. She let the dagger fall, and rested her face in her hands, and sobbed in thankfulness.

It was a long time before the girl grew calm again. When at last she raised her head and looked at me I was struck by the transformation in her expression. It seemed to reflect my own determination. I had put forth my will to the uttermost, and hers seemed fused with mine.

"I was never afraid of dying, Arnold," she said. "It is the dreadful passions of life that are so hard to bear. How they sweep us away!"

"I am going to save you, Elizabeth," I answered. "You are not destined to die in this earthly hell.

She looked at me hard. "Arnold, are you yourself in danger here?" she asked.

"Only of hell-fire," I answered. I did not know whether she understood.

"You must save yourself and not think of me," she answered.

I bade her sit still and went to the entrance of the little house. I had half expected that the door would have been

locked behind me, but it stood open, having evidently become unhasped, and the sickly odor of the pervading perfume clung to the warm, stale air. I crossed the close to the gate that led into the palace garden and stood hesitating there, wondering where I could find a way to safety for us both.

The solar lights had been turned off, and all was dark inside the crystal enclosure, except for flashing sparks of vari-colored lights that twinkled among the trees. In the distance I heard the tinkle of stringed instruments plucked by the finger, subdued voices calling each other; I had the sense of things hidden in the thick undergrowth. I could not bring myself to tread those forest paths again. If hell can wear the mask of beauty, surely it did that night.

I dragged my heavy limbs across the lawn and began to skirt the graveled path that extended before me, half hiding in the thickets, working my way along the front of Lembken's palace. The squat white building gleamed against the darkness. I passed the front entrance; nobody stirred; there were no lights, but always I had the sense of something trailing me through the trees and keeping pace with me.

At last I saw the crystal walls on the west side, and, beyond them, the myriad lights of London, a city of soft day with ink-black cañons cleaving it. I stood in hesitancy. On my right were the thickets, on my left the crystal ended in a stone wall. There was no egress in that direction; only, as I perceived, within the palace itself, by means of the elevator. Lembken evidently left nothing to surprise.

As I turned back I heard the rustle of stealthy footsteps near me in the grass. A red spark drew my eyes along the vista of the orange-trees, whose perfume-laden flowers dispelled the cloying odor of the scented night. I saw beyond them a mænad's face, framed in a leopard skin, peering at me above a bank of hibiscus. It vanished with the dying of the spark, and mocking laughter followed it.

I did not doubt but that each step of mine was watched.

And every inch of that pleasure garden was clogged with memories of shame. All that was evil in the world seemed to have its focus there. I felt it, breathed it; once more its psychic dominance began to crush my soul. I saw with sudden intuition why, in a world less stable, witches were burned,

how passionately the souls of simple men fought for their heritage of truth and law. This was the negation of life, of all that struggling life that aspired upward and set its heel upon the serpent's head. Old myths, made real in this new light, flashed into memory. I could not take Elizabeth that way, even though it were to safety.

I hurried back to the close and fastened the iron gate behind me. The sweat was dripping from my forehead when I regained the safety of the little house. I burst through the swinging door into the library.

Elizabeth was not there.

I ran into the third room. She was not there, either. Terror gripped me. Had she been lured away during the few minutes of my absence? It seemed impossible. She would have cried, resisted.

Then my eyes fell on something that hung outside the window, dangling, evidently, from some fixed point above. It was a rope ladder, and moving outward. As I watched I saw it begin to rise in a succession of short jerks.

I grasped it. It pulled me from the floor. I clung to it desperately; it drew me to the level of the window, through the window-gap in the wall, and I swung far out above the Air-scouts' Fort. Looking up, I saw that the ladder hung from a scout-plane overhead.

I swung at the ladder's end by my hands only, making great transverse sweeps that carried me high above the bridge, from end to end of the fortress roof, like the weight at the bottom of a pendulum. I saw the courts swing under me. I flew from the crystal wall to nothingness, and London was a reeling dance of lights. Then the ladder began to descend. My feet brushed the roof of the fortress. I wrenched my numbed hands free and fell, and a moment later the air-plane dropped beside me as noiselessly as an alighting bird, and two men sprang from it and seized me.

One was the air-scout Jones. He caught me by both arms and twisted me backward. But the other leaped at my throat with trembling, twining fingers. This man was David. He would have strangled me, but Jones pulled him away.

Then Elizabeth ran forward and interposed herself between us. "Arnold is not to blame!" she cried. "He tried to save me!"

David recoiled. The air-scout caught

me by the arms and pulled me within the entrance. He forced me into the cage of a small elevator, the others followed, and we descended a few feet, emerging into a small, bare room with walls of unsquared stone.

Jones sent the elevator upward and pulled the door of the shaft to. "Now we will talk," he said fiercely to me. "You shall have five minutes to explain yourself. If you can not——"

He pulled a ray-rod from his tunic and stood waiting.

CHAPTER TWELVE

In the Air-scouts' Fortress

SO I TOLD them my story from the beginning. And, as I proceeded, I realized that I was no longer in the position of a prisoner awaiting death. David's whole aspect had changed; he was struggling to keep himself in control, and trembling violently. Jones was hardly less moved. When I had ended they regarded me in silence, and there was awe on their faces. Nobody spoke for a long time.

Then Elizabeth slipped her hand into mine. "We believe you, Arnold," she whispered.

Three times David attempted to speak while I was sketching briefly the remainder of my adventures up to the point of my encounter with Elizabeth, and each time his voice failed him.

"Arnold," he managed to say at last, "we know that every word you have told us is true. If you had told me before! But I see how incredible you must have thought your story would seem. Now listen to me! The horrors of life, the burden laid on the world can not endure much longer. Plans are well under way to make an end of them and give back to humanity her long-cherished freedom. You have unwittingly placed a wonderful weapon in our hands. No man can be neutral in these times. Now, Arnold, you must make a decision which will affect all of us, and Britain, the Federation, civilization. You must choose your side."

He turned to Jones. "He must be told nothing until the time comes," he continued, assuming a tone of authority. "You will say nothing—nor you, Elizabeth."

They nodded assent. David turned to me again.

"Arnold, you must make your choice now," he said. "Lembken needs you for reasons which are clear to us, thanks to the statement that you have made. If you go back to him he can give you power and liberty to lord it over the common people until the day of reckoning arrives. If you join with us you must become an outlaw and associate yourself with us in the most desperate endeavor, play a leading rôle and share our dangers——"

"How can you doubt?" I cried. "I am with you now, and at all times."

David held up his hand. "Wait!" he said. "You must first understand our situation, and why we are here to-night."

"It is not necessary, David," I answered.

"Yes, it is necessary," he replied. "Because you do not understand why we are resolved to lay down our lives, why life has grown unbearable. Ten years ago Sanson introduced his system of mating under Council supervision."

"It is abominable!" I cried.

"Yet, like every other institution, it has its roots far back in the past," said David, "and only needed the abandonment of the Christian ideal to spring full-fledged into being. The Prophet foreshadowed it, and on this point the followers of Galton and the Mendelian-eugenist school joined hands with Socialism in a concerted attack upon monogamy. This, in fact, had been the crux of the old battle between Socialism and the Church: on the one hand the old ideal of the family as the unit of society, an indissoluble bond based on duty and constancy; on the other the individual, absolved from responsibility, and seeking his own fancied freedom."

He began to explain the circumstances that had led up to Elizabeth's arrest. It appeared that the girl was one of that rare class of women who were physically almost perfect, and, as such, she had been in terror of being placed upon the list of those who were to enter the harems of the whites. Her lover, Paul, had been adjudged a defective, but had escaped to the forests. David's sole hope in saving her from the anticipated fate lay in the fact that she was penalized six points because her grandfather had had epileptic seizures. But she approximated so closely to the rigid Sanson norm that there had been little hope of saving her. This fear had been increased by the fact that Lembken had seen Elizabeth

and had recently found an excuse to summon her and her father to the Council Hall, under the pretense of wishing to confer some favor on an old subordinate. And the girl's name had been posted in the auditorium that afternoon, on a list of whites, which I had not seen.

Now I understood everything. David had returned from the Strangers' Bureau that afternoon to find the apartment empty. Jones, who had learned what had occurred, had contrived to convey word to him, and had secreted him in the Air-scouts' Fortress pending a plan of rescue, a task which was rendered easier by the disaffection of the air-scouts. Jones had seen me in my priest's robes, and the two men had naturally concluded that I had been playing one of the romantic parts in fashion among the whites in order to see Elizabeth in her home before accepting her. During my absence Jones had rescued Elizabeth by means of the air-plane and the rope ladder. It was no wonder David had flown at my throat.

"But is there no law?" I cried. "Have we no judges? Is there no freedom?"

"The Statute Law is codified in ninety volumes, Arnold, and we have a very intricate hierarchy of judges. In fact, our judicial system is more elaborate than anything the Romans or the old English ever devised. But the first act of the victorious democracy was to institute the election and recall of judges. Justice died; and when elections became an annual farce of the Council you can imagine what sort of judges were chosen."

"Now, Arnold, what is your decision?" David asked.

"The same," I answered. "I made it long ago."

"Then, Arnold, you must come with us to-night. We are going to seek refuge in the forests where our friends are hiding. Jones will carry us there to-night when he takes his scout-plane upon patrol duty. It is a difficult problem to pass the night patrol otherwise, and no passes are now issued to leave London, on account of the Russian war. But Jones can get us through."

He wrung my hand hard.

"You have decided wisely," he said, "and by your decision you have taken the only possible means to save and win the woman you love. For the Sanson régime is crumbling, and only the guard upholds it. We

have four thousand outlaws and fugitives from the defectives' shops scattered in secret hiding-places among the forests within twenty-five kilometers of London. These are to form the nucleus of our projected stroke, which was to have taken place within the next two decamerals. Now it will be sooner. We have secreted ray-rods, made in the shops. Cleared spaces in the forests were sown last summer, and we have grain. You see, we have provided for this during a long period. To-night the leaders are to assemble——"

"In the cellar where I lay so long!" I exclaimed. "And Jones had been there with ray-rods or provisions some time before I awakened."

"Correct," answered the air-scout laconically.

"We remain here until the solar lights go out," said David. "Then we shall go up to the roof, and we shall start well before the moon rises."

"I am with you to the end," I said. And I swore that I would do all in my power, so long as I had life and liberty, to fight for human freedom. And as I swore I had a vision of a beautiful young girl, mangled and crushed upon the stones beneath that tropical, aerial hell which bloomed under the dome of England's shameful Temple.

I think the resolution in my manner must have enkindled David, for he flung out his arm and caught my hand in his again, and wrung and held it.

"You do not know now, Arnold, how necessary you are to us," he said. "But you shall be told to-night. I am old, Arnold; I have little courage. I have lived through too many changes and frustrated hopes. I had grown used and resigned to things that had come to seem unchangeable. The freedom of my youth was only a dream to me. Sometimes I doubted that man had ever been free. It was your surprise, your ignor-

ance, then the indignation you thought I did not see that made me understand the depths of my degradation. And it was to-night's work that gave me heart to set my soul altogether upon our cause. I have been one of the revolutionary committee for a year, but I lacked the courage to throw everything to the winds and leave the city. Now we will fight whole-heartedly, and together."

"David," I said with sudden conviction, "you are a Christian!"

"I am!" he cried. "As we all are. I have temporized with evil all these years, but now I can not any more. The hope of the world can never be crushed out; it is spreading everywhere. Though only the bare outlines of the faith have come down to most of us, we are all enlisted under that flag that was raised upon the Mount two thousand years ago. We see that without Christ life has become intolerable. I knew your faith from the first, Arnold, although I dared not speak; at first I guessed it because I thought you were a Russian, and that was why I befriended you and would not let you tell me; but afterward my guess became conviction. We know our own!" he cried triumphantly.

Elizabeth put one arm about her father's neck and gave her free hand to me. I clasped hers, and then that of the air-scout; and so we pledged ourselves.

There was an hour to wait. Jones left us and presently returned, carrying a gray uniform upon his arm.

"You can not wear those robes," he said. "You must put this on. It should fit you; it belonged to one of our recruits from the north who was ascribed here last week and neglected to return it to the Wool Stores."

I was glad to step out of the priest's robes. Jones left us again, brought back some food, and disappeared for the third time, promising to return at midnight.

The next instalment of "The Messiah of the Cylinder" will appear in the August number.



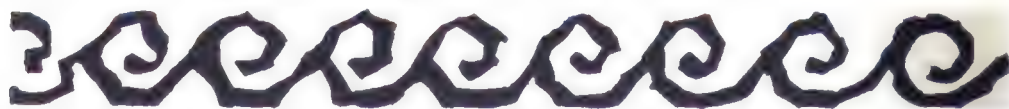
THE MESSIAH OF THE CYLINDER

By Victor Rousseau

ILLUSTRATED BY JOSEPH CLEMENT COLL

THE story begins a short time before the outbreak of the great world war, and Arnold Pennell, who tells it is projected into the next century by means of a vacuum cylinder equipped with a time-clock set at a hundred years. The cylinder is the idea of Herman Lazaroff, a brilliant young materialist who looks forward to a scientific world freed of faith and humanitarianism. Lazaroff is associated in a biological lab-

oratory with Arnold, and the two men are both in love with their chief's daughter, Esther. One evening Lazaroff takes the other two into a secret cellar to show them three vacuum cylinders, in which, he professes, he means to seal up some monkeys and send them on a hundred years. By way of jest, he induces Arnold to enter one of the cylinders—and immediately the automatic cap shuts him in.



When Arnold regains consciousness, he is in a desperate state of weakness and bewilderment; but he is able to struggle out of the opened cylinder. Finally, the hideous truth dawns on him that he has been unconscious for a hundred years. He makes his way outside at last, and is presently seen by an aviator, who asks him strange questions, and carries him to London. This is a city he never dreamed of—buildings fifty stories high, all dazzling white, moving streets roofed with crystal, people strangely dressed. Arnold is conducted to the Strangers' House, and David, the Strangers' Guard, explains to him this curious life he has entered. David tells him that the world, except for a few countries, is ruled by Science, that faith is dead, and that the Federation of nations is dominated by two men—Boss Lembken and Doctor Sanson.

Arnold is secretly summoned to the Temple, and here he makes the astounding discovery that the Temple Goddess is his sweetheart Esther, sleeping in the second cylinder. And the dials are set for only five days ahead! Leaving her, Arnold tries to make his way to Sanson, who occupies one wing of the Temple. He is seized and conducted to Boss Lembken's Palace, in the dome above the Temple. Here Lembken shows him his lovely gardens, and gives him a house, where Arnold finds David's daughter, Elizabeth, locked in. Believing him base, Elizabeth tries to kill him; finally she is convinced of his friendship; and when he escapes by means of a ladder hanging from a scout-plane, which has rescued her, she defends him against her father. In the Air-scouts' Fortress—another wing of the Temple—Arnold learns that David and Elizabeth belong to a company of Christian rebels, who are determined to overthrow Sanson. Arnold, pledging himself, is told that he will learn that night his own place in their plan.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Messiah's Annunciation

AT LAST Jones, the air-scout, returned. "We can start now," he said. "The lights have gone out and the last scout-plane has left."

We went up to the roof. Deep night was over and about us. The phosphorescent fronts of the glow-painted buildings gave London the aspect of long lines of parallel and intersecting palisades of ghostly light; but the glow paint illumined nothing, and the deep cañons where the streets ran were of velvety darkness. The white circle of the Moslems' fortress surrounded us. Outside the region of the glow London was an undistinguishable, blurred shadow, save where the searchlights from the departing air-

planes swept it. They hovered in a long line above the city, some luminous, some dark and invisible, their positions discernible only by the radiating white search-rays that emanated from them. Slowly the air-ships disappeared in the southern distance.

Rain began to fall, spattering upon the crystal walls of the adjacent gardens, in which the colored lights still flashed like pin-points. My face was wet with it. I was thinking of the old days, when life was free; Sir Spofforth's rain-swept garden, the scent of Esther's tea-roses, and the hum of the ungainly town of Croydon. I saw Esther's face upon the velvet screen of the night.

The memory of her need nerved me; and, in serving Elizabeth, I felt that I served Esther, vicariously, but not less truly. I felt Elizabeth's hand in mine.

"You are our hope, Arnold. You can inspire our people to victory," she whispered.

Jones had got the scout-plane ready. It was a little craft, even smaller than I had thought, in looking back on that first ride, and it carried no ray-shield to reveal its presence. Jones placed us three in the double seat, Elizabeth in the center, David and me one on either side of her, half seated, half supported by the front uprights. Jones squatted in front of us, took the wheel in his hands, touched the starting-lever with his right foot, and the craft rose heavily into the air, straining at first until the mechanism came into unison. In spite of the counterbalance of the searchlight behind, the nose of the plane dipped constantly, so that our flight was a succession of abrupt ascents and declinations.

It was freezing cold up in the January air. Gradually we worked our way upward until I felt the ozone-laden breezes from the Thames estuary beat on my face. Then the south was cleft by a long, flaming serpent, with eyes of fire.

"The food air-vans from the south of France," said David, pointing.

Now we were soaring over the outlying factories and warehouses. A huge glow-painted building sprang into view.

"The defectives' workshops," said David. "Beyond is the Council art factory."

Presently the darkness in front of us began to be studded with parallelograms of dazzling glow, set at wide intervals, each capped with the glow-painted conical ray-guns. From these, extending fanwise toward the ground, and again piercing the

heavens, appearing almost pink in contrast with the glow's intense purple white, the searchlights wavered.

Jones halted the scout-plane in the air. "The battle-planes," he said, pointing. "They are posted around London nightly now. You know the reason, David?"

David turned and placed his hand on the air-scout's shoulder.

Jones dropped his voice to a whisper. "It is the merest rumor among our men," he said. "One reads it in their faces rather than hears it spoken, for few of us have dared communicate our opinions and surmises to one another. One can be sure that Sanson has his spies in the Air-scouts' Fort as elsewhere. But the scout-planes are enough to patrol London, and there would only be one cause for sending out the battle-planes. If the rumor is true that the Russians have broken out of Tula——"

"Thank God!" said David in a tense whisper.

"—they will overrun Skandogermania in two weeks, for it is as disaffected as Britain. The air-scouts will go over and place their vessels at their disposal. There is no force between London and Tula to oppose them except our battle-planes and the Moslem Guard. Neither Sanson nor Lembken dreamed that they could overthrow the besiegers."

Could Russia indeed restore freedom to the Western world? I saw the hope on David's face.

"It is only a rumor," said the air-scout, laying his hand on the steering-wheel, "a rumor merely, you understand, backed by the presence of our battle-plane squadron around the city nightly—words let fall in the People's House, retailed by gossiping servants—the sudden summons last night of Air-Admiral Hancock."

"But Hancock will stand by Lembken," said David.

"Yes, and will hold a fourth of our men to him," answered Jones. "He will serve Sanson too, as long as Sanson remains loyal. Our chance lies in the rivalry of the two leaders. If Sanson conspires against Lembken, Hancock will fight him to the death. Years ago, when Hancock was unknown, Sanson sent his son to the Rest-cure Home as a moron."

"Why, then, is Hancock not with us?" I asked, shuddering.

"There are traditions of loyalty in his

family," answered Jones. "Some men praise those ideas. I don't. Now we are going up. Hold fast!"

The scout-plane creaked and rocked and plunged like a ship in a gale as, foot by foot, Jones jerked her head into the higher air. The gleaming glow parallelograms of the battle-planes seemed to shoot downward as we soared above them. We had passed them when, somewhere out of the darkness, like an invisible air monster, a large dark plane glided beneath us. I felt our scout-plane thrill as she shot upward, so suddenly that she rose almost to the perpendicular, jerking us backward against the stays.

Jones was straining madly at the wheel. Now I realized that the dark plane was in pursuit of us. I saw her swoop forward out of the darkness, missing us narrowly. She disappeared. I heard the divided air hiss as she approached again, and the next instant a blinding searchlight enveloped us, and a voice hailed us, piping thin through the frosty night. Then the light was astern, and groping impotently beneath us as we rose to a higher level. Jones strained at the vertical gear, pushing the plane's nose upward and up, battling like a weather-beaten bird against the wind.

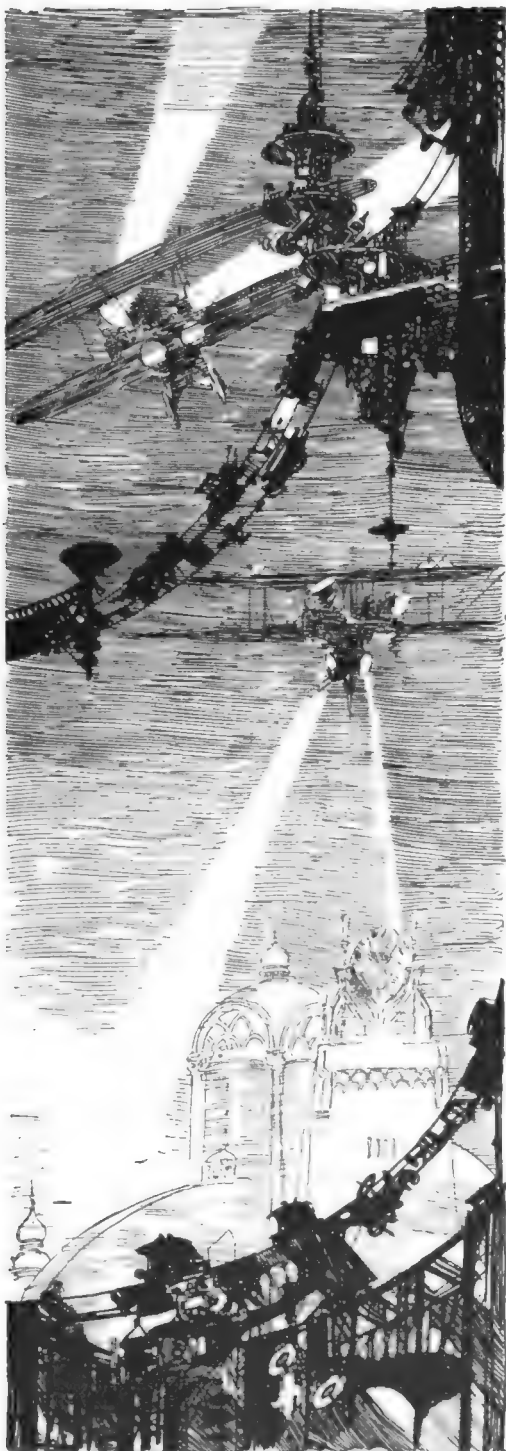
Again the searchlight found us, and then, out of the heart of it, a light ten times more brilliant hissed, snapping and crackling, into the void. Jones veered, still mounting. The dazzling light flared out again, but far to the right of us. Again! The upright that I held snapped in my hand. I slipped in my seat and felt David's hand on my shoulder.

Once more the ray-flash came, but under us. The darkness and our pilot's courage had saved us. The searchlight quivered and groped, below. Our scout-plane dipped, soared, dipped, caught the wind, and we volplaned at a furious speed for miles down a gradient of cushiony air.

"Are we safe now?" asked David.

"Safe long ago," said Jones. "It was touch and go while I was trying to top that southeaster. He lost us at the summit, though, and he couldn't have caught us on the down-grade."

We started again, traveling more slowly, at a lower altitude, and planing downward until I saw the glistening snow beneath. The scout-plane flitted back and forth, seeking the road. To and fro we went like a fluttering bird, until the cleft of the ancient road



THE AIR-PLANES HOVERED ABOVE THE CITY. THEIR POSITIONS DISCERNIBLE BY THE SEARCH-RAYS THAT EMANATED FROM THEM.

appeared between the boles of the trees. Then we dropped softly to the ground.

I was almost too cramped and cold to get out of the plane. With difficulty I managed to descend and help Elizabeth out. David followed, and we three stood chafing our hands and stamping until the circulation was restored.

Jones leaned forward from the air-plane. "I'll run her among the trees, in case any one comes along overhead," he said.

"We shall not see you until—" asked David.

"I'm not going back," answered the air-scout, whistling through his teeth. "You'll see me in ten minutes."

David grasped him by the hands warmly. Jones whistled again, and the scout-plane rose to the tree-tops and vanished.

David turned to me. "Arnold, are you prepared for what you will learn to-night?"

"Yes, he is prepared," answered Elizabeth.

We set off through the forest along a small, well-worn trail, until the crumbling bricks underfoot heaped themselves into a mound, and I saw the ruined foundations of the Institute before me, and the hole in the cellar roof through which I had emerged. A sentinel leaped out at us.

"For man?" he asked, leveling a ray-rod.

"And freedom," answered David.

The sentinel called, and in a moment a crowd came running up a short ladder, wild-looking men with beards and hanging hair, dressed in tatters and rags, a woman or two, and a youth who sprang forward with a cry and clasped Elizabeth in his arms.

"Paul!" I heard her murmur, as she raised her lips to his.

David led me to a tall old man with bowed shoulders and a white beard that covered his breast. There was a calm, benignant happiness in his blue eyes, which were both childlike and keen. His hands were seared and twisted like those of one who has lived years of hardest toil, and the staff on which he leaned had a crooked handle.

"Bishop Alfred," said David, "this is the Messiah who was to come."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Chapel Underground

IN THE subterranean chapel, lit by rushlights that sent the shadows scurrying across the walls and made fantastically unreal the eager faces and the

dissolving groups that clustered now about me, now about David, and again gathered round the tall old bishop with his peasant's face and child's eyes, David told them my story, and they, in turn, took up the narration of the legend which I had brought so wonderfully to fulfilment.

I began to gather, to my relief, that only the very ignorant believed that the Messiah would be a supernatural being. There was superstition enough hidden in the hearts of even the wisest; for faith, denied, creeps into men's hearts in strange guises; but the world had awaited, rather, the arrival of the inevitable leader who must come to set free a people grown overripe for freedom. For the horrors of the new civilization had reached the point where men had grown reckless of their lives. Everywhere was anticipation of the coming change, and even Sanson must have seen that neither his guard nor the great ray artillery could save his crumbling power. Science had overplayed her part when she had bankrupted human hearts.

Everywhere the deep sense of intolerable wrongs was spreading fast. Only the oldest could remember the days of the past, and the memory of these had become confused; yet they, too, felt that famine and war were preferable to what they endured.

And although only the oldest remembered the time when Christianity was a vital faith, yet the hopes of all hinged on it. There was no other hope for the world but the same light that lit the darkness in the most shameless days of Rome's high civilization. So they had enlisted beneath the ancient banner of human freedom; dozens had died under torture rather than disclose the hiding-place of their treasured Scriptures, laboriously penned in the new syllabic characters. There was a rich harvest to come from many a martyr's blood.

So, then, there had filtered through the years the dim belief that in 2017—or seven-and-thirty years after the institution of the new era—a Messiah was to come and restore liberty to the world. It had arisen with the discovery of the cylinder that contained Esther's body, somewhere about the middle of the preceding century, and after the beginning of the first revolutionary outbreak.

In some manner unknown this cylinder made its appearance in the world. It had become the symbol of the revolution—Freedom sleeping. It had been carried at

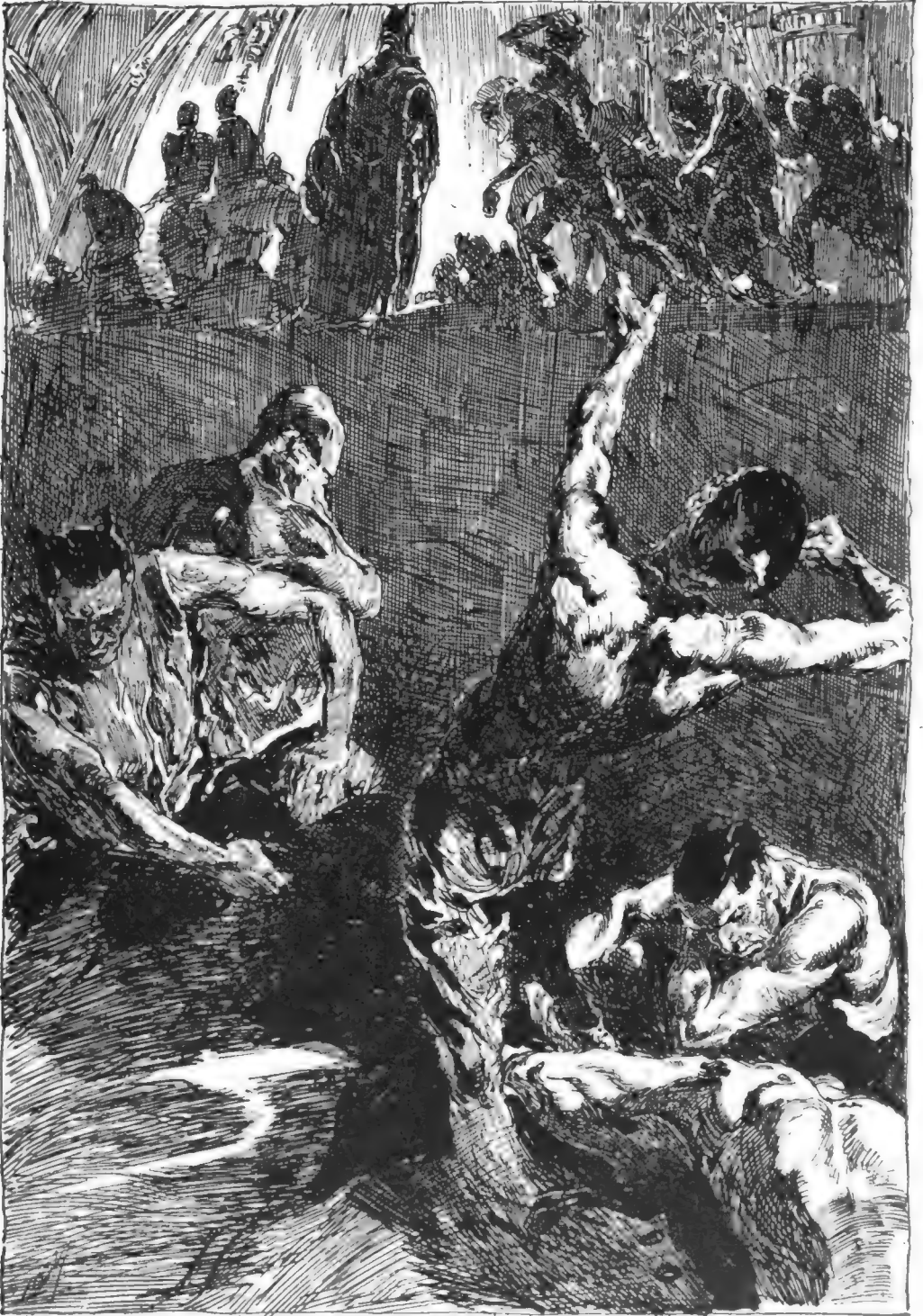
the head of marching armies. Men had fought and died over it. It had been struck by unnumbered bullets, for it had been lost and regained upon a dozen battle-fields. Then it had vanished with the inauguration of the reactionary régime, to appear again, the inspiration of new hopes, when Sanson sprang to his leadership, about the year 1982.

I inferred that Sanson, who had at first wished to be rid of the cylinder, on account of the popular hopes and superstitions that were clustering about it, had come into possession of the papers Lazaroff had left, and had shrewdly resolved to turn the legend to his own use by furthering it and placing the date for its fulfilment. He had set the cylinder within the Temple and diffused the report that, when Esther awakened, they two would rule the world together and offer immortality to mankind.

After I heard the story we kneeled in prayer, and the bishop read to us from the syllabic version of the Bible, as it was known. It comprised only a few portions of the Old Testament, chiefly parts of Isaiah and the Major Prophets. Of the Synoptic Gospels there existed only a few fragments, but there were the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount, and the whole of the magnificent Gospel according to St. John, together with most of the Acts and Corinthians, debased to some extent, but, on the whole, faithful to the original.

Though the entire Bible has now been recovered, I am convinced, that the world has gained immeasurably by the removing of the scaffolding of the Temple of Truth during more than two generations. Never again will literal interpretation be placed upon Old Testament mythology, the poetic allegory of Creation and the Fall, the chronology that offered the life-cycles of tribes as the events of single lives, or the moral fable of Jonah and the mystery play of Job; nor will the warrior god Jehovah be considered anything but an incompletely discerned aspect of the divine.

Afterward, at David's urging, I rose to speak. I hardly knew what I should say; but as I stood, before the meeting, some Pentecostal power seemed to lay hold of me, and impassioned phrases were struck from my lips until I felt all hearts enkindle from the flame in mine. I spoke of the old, free world on which they looked back with such dread; of old, illogical, and cherished



A MAN NEAR ME LEAPED UP AND PEERED INTO THE GLOOM.

customs, preserved through centuries, uniting peoples in a fellowship that logic could not attain; of ideals and traditions and memories borne onward from age to age, ennobling and strengthening a people's soul; of pride of birth other than that of pedigreed stock; of initiative and resourcefulness, charity and good-will for weak as well as for strong; and of a ruling class bound by its traditions to public service, and open to all below who had the character and gifts to enter it.

When I ended, I came back to myself to find that I was standing tongue-tied before them. I heard a sigh ascend from every lip; and then they were round me, falling upon their knees, grasping my hands, imploring me to accept their service and devotion.

Elizabeth wept happily beside me. "I knew, Arnold," she said—"I knew you could inspire them."

Then those who constituted the revolutionary committee took their seats upon the planks, and, while the rest gathered about them, proceeded to consider the reports brought in. It was an informal meeting and hampered by no rules, but conducted with earnestness and quiet decorousness. Man after man rose and made his detailed report, the leaders of the guilds pledging so many men, telling of the enthusiasm among their followers, stating the number of ray-ods in their possession, and pledging absolute obedience to the committee.

Then I was acquainted, as succinctly as possible, with the progress of the movement. It was known that during the next few days Sanson meant to address the assemblage that would gather in the Temple on the occasion of the annual rejoicings over the establishment of the new order. He was universally accredited with the intention of effecting a *coup d'état*, deposing Lembken and assuming the leadership of the Eastern World.

Intense rivalry and hate existed between the Guard, under Sanson, and the air-scouts, who obeyed Lembken. The latter, permeated by revolutionary ideas, could be relied upon to oppose the Moslems. Whether the air-scouts would oppose Lembken in a triangular contest between Lembken, Sanson, and the populace was more doubtful, since Hancock's loyalty would have considerable weight. The fear was that, if the air-scouts were split by faction, the Guard would overwhelm them and place

Sanson firmly in power. Thus the greatest circumspection was necessary, so as to utilize the antagonism between the two bodies of troops without displacing Lembken and leaving Sanson absolute.

The committee leader, an elderly man who had voluntarily laid aside his white robes and joined the others, alluded to the belief, already current among revolutionary bands, that the Federation's troops had been overwhelmed before Tula, and that the forces of Russia were pouring into Skandogermania to seize the battle-planes and troop-planes from the disaffected air-scouts at Hamburg and Berlin, and launch them against London. It was believed that the Council must be in desperate straits.

"You have heard," continued the old man, "how Lembken summoned our leader to the palace in his crafty way. He knows who Arnold is. Then he must be aware of Sanson's plans and be plotting a counter-stroke. He is old and obese and pleasure-loving. But you must not forget that Lembken rose to power by most cunning schemes. Sanson underrates the old fox: Lembken has his ear to the ground, and while he is supposed to be drinking and roistering in that hell of his, he is no doubt engaged in elaborating some master-stroke. Now we can despise no weapon that will aid our cause, friends. If we have to utilize Lembken, as the lesser evil, in order to unite the air-scouts under Hancock against Sanson——"

"Never!" shouted the bearded leader of the traffic guild. "He—he—he—" The giant broke down, sobbing. "My daughter," he raved, with the tears streaming down into his beard, and clenching his enormous fists. "Only—to-day—to-day—I would not desert the cause, or I should have forced my way into the People's House——"

The old leader rose up and, approaching the giant, put his hand on his shoulder. "Even for the sake of the cause you can not consent?" he asked him.

The giant threw back his head and masked his face. "Yes, for the cause—yes," he replied, and moved quietly away. He stood some distance from us, his head drooping on his breast, looking like a colossus. I understood better then the depths of the revolutionary fervor.

"I can only offer the outlines of my plan," resumed the old man, returning to his place, "because, in such a time, we must

trust as much to the spontaneous enthusiasm and instincts of our people as to details which may miscarry. But it seems to me that it is essential to enter first into negotiations with Lembken. There is no question that he will accept our offer in return for certain concessions: his palace and women, perhaps, and an untroubled life hereafter with titular dignity. It is a hard compromise, but Sanson must be destroyed.

"Five days hence, when Sanson summons the people into the Temple, let as many of us as possible assemble there, with ray-rods beneath our tunics. Arnold will advance and challenge Sanson's power. We will spring forward, seize Sanson, possess ourselves of the cylinder and guard its occupant, assume possession of the Temple buildings, and set up a free government. Meanwhile the air-scouts will attack the Moslems and capture the ray artillery."

Jones stood up in the midst of the assembly. He had come in quietly some time before. "The plan to seize the ray artillery is impracticable," he said bluntly.

"Why?" a dozen voices demanded.

"Because the small ray-guns on the battle-planes are useless against the glow on the Guard's Fortress, and the Guard's great ray artillery will pick off the battle-planes one by one as they expose their unprotected parts while maneuvering in the air. You know that it is impossible to protect the interior parts of a plane surrounding the solar storage distributors, because the glow rays interfere with the violet end of the spectrum. Besides, when each of our men has discharged his two or three ray-rods, where is he to recharge them without access to the solar storage dynamos within the fortress?"

"What would you do, then?" asked the committee leader.

"Cut the solar supply cables at the heart of the world's power system—in the Vosges," answered Jones. "Make the ray artillery useless at a stroke, and then storm the fort, man against man, in the old way."

I saw the face of the traffic leader grow dark with blood. "Yes!" he shouted. "Yes! That is the way!"

The committee leader held up his hand for silence. "Wait! Who will venture to evade the battle-planes and reach the Vosges?" he asked.

"I can. I will," answered the air-scout boldly.

"And who will go to Lembken as our emissary?" asked the committee leader.

"I will," I answered.

David started toward me. "No! The risk is too great!" he cried. "We need you in the Temple on the appointed day, or everything will miscarry, and Lembken may reject your offer."

"We need your leadership for the people's sake," said the committee leader.

"You forget," I answered sadly, "that I, too, have all I hold dear at stake. I am fighting for the woman I love, and—I, too, shall succeed or die."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Sanson

FOR a long time I could not persuade them to let me go. But I pleaded so hard, and so forcibly, that at last I persuaded them.

"The only way to enter London will be afoot," said the committee leader to me. "If you succeed in evading the searchlights from the battle-planes, which should be possible with the exercise of caution, you will then proceed at once to the People's House and demand audience of Lembken. You will carry to him our offer of cooperation, by which he is to remain titular head of the Federation and enjoy his palace unmolested. Lembken will perhaps send you back with his reply. You may insist on this as a sign that our proposals are accepted."

The rushlights were blown out, and we bade each other adieu at the cellar entrance and separated. Many of those present had traveled miles through the forests in order to attend the meeting. It was arranged that David and Elizabeth should make their quarters with the band to which Bishop Alfred belonged. I was to accompany them as far as the old road, where our ways divided.

"In three days, dear," I heard her lover say to Elizabeth as they parted.

She looked very happy when she came up to us, as we waited for her upon the trail. We proceeded in single file, and when at last we reached the road she turned and put her hands on my shoulders and looked at me very earnestly.

"Arnold," she said, "the day will come when we four shall be reunited in a free world. God bless you and preserve the girl you love."

I pressed her hands. She turned away, and David gripped my hands in turn.

"Good-by, Arnold," he said. "The chance that brought you to me was divine Providence and will save us all."

And he, too, was gone. I waited, watching them until they had disappeared among the trees. Then I was alone, the London road before me, and a mission as desperate as had ever been undertaken, and as pregnant with possibilities.

I do not know how long I had been walking, or whether I walked, indeed, or ran. I became conscious of my surroundings at the sound of a soft whistling in the air, and, glancing up, I saw, against the risen moon, the dark air-plane. I sprang from the road and hid myself in the underbrush that fringed it.

The air-plane dipped, passed me, and dipped again, evidently with the purpose of descending. The occupant had not, however, sighted me, for the machine passed out of sight flying low and veering slightly from side to side as though the driver were looking for a suitable alighting-place.

As I rose hurriedly to continue my journey, I heard myself hailed from among the trees. I started, looked around, and perceived the old bishop approaching. He came up and stood before me, holding his pastoral crook against his breast.

"Did you see the air-plane?" he inquired.

"Yes, but what are you doing here?" I asked in astonishment. There was a look of supreme happiness upon his face. "Are you alone?"

"Yes, alone," he answered, smiling. "I left them quietly. They would not have let me go. I followed you until I saw the air-plane. Perhaps it will take me to London and save me the long tramp. I am going to Lembken in your place."

"But you will be put to death!" I cried. "Surely you know——"

"Yes, but that is right," he answered. "It is three years since anybody has been burned for the faith. I have been thinking about it for a long time, and I don't like this bloody talk. Christians ought not to fight, they ought to suffer. So I am going into the People's House to preach the gospel.

"You see," he explained, "I am the last bishop of England. I am not a learned man, and quite unworthy, but the Right Reverend Lord Bishop of London, Herbert Londiniensis"—how happily the childish

old man rolled out the long-forgotten title!—"laid hands on me before they burned him in Westminster Hall. It wasn't according to the Book of Common Prayer, because the time was so short, but he told me the form was not of much importance, and he consecrated me his successor. So it is quite right that I should follow him and take on martyrdom. It will give inspiration to the people. It will be a wonderful encouragement to them to see me among the fagots. I have been thinking over it for a long time. I should like to consecrate my successor before I am burned, but the Russians will take care of that. They will be here in a few days now, to save the world, and Christendom will become one."

"How do you know?" I cried.

"I know," he answered, wagging his white head. "So there is no longer any reason why I should not go into the People's House and bear testimony to the truth."

Before I could quite recover my faculties he had started off along the road, and his quick jog carried him with surprising speed. I caught him a hundred yards further.

"Bishop Alfred, you must go to your friends," I said, catching at his sleeve. "Your idea is nonsense. There is no need to sacrifice yourself."

He shook me off. I stumbled over a projecting root, and when I was on my feet again the old figure was nearly fifty yards away. Once more I was on the point of overtaking him; and then I halted and drew back among the trees. For just beyond the bend in the road lay the dark air-plane, and the old man had halted beside it and was waiting, evidently, to be admitted.

However, since he continued to stand there, I advanced noiselessly toward the air-vessel, taking cover as I approached through the underbrush, till I perceived that it was empty. Then, among the trees, following the crooked trail not seventy paces away, I perceived the driver of the dark plane, walking with head bent downward, evidently unconscious that there were human beings anywhere near him.

The twisting track, which had hidden him from my sight, brought him into view once more, his moving figure a silhouette against the low moon's circle. I followed, creeping up, until suddenly I stood still, horrified and astounded. For this was Hugo Sanson, the madman who ruled the Eastern World.

For a few moments I was powerless to stir. A raiding beast of night went rustling through the glades behind me. In the distance I heard an owl. I lurked like some savage in the brush, and now everything disappeared from my memory, save Esther in peril, and Sanson, the tyrant of the world, humanity's evil genius, yet powerless in my hands if I could spring on him before he had time to draw his ray-rod.

I began stalking him as stealthily as any redskin following his enemy. He was now only twenty paces ahead, and his poise showed that he suspected no danger.

The scattered bricks became heaping piles once more. I crouched low as I followed Sanson. A flood of memories surged over my mind. Almost upon this spot Sir Spofforth's house had stood. There, where the beeches waved their leafless arms, had been Esther's tea-roses. And here were thorny briars, sprung, perhaps, from stock of Esther's planting. It needed these remembrances to make my resolution firm.

Sanson was going into the cellar. If he had gone there an hour earlier he would have walked alone into the presence of men who had a hundred deaths laid up against him. But fate had saved him for me. Of that I felt confident.

I made the descent after him, taking infinite pains to dislodge no stone whose fall might betray my presence. Now I crouched in the cellar upon my hands and knees, watching Sanson as he moved to and fro within the inner chamber.

My fingers touched and closed about a smooth object that lay on the ground. For a moment I thought it was the branch of a tree. But no branch grew so smooth as that. It seemed rather a polished stave. It had been fashioned and grooved—it was a ray-rod.

If I had ever doubted my mission, I ceased to do so in that moment. I felt along the weapon in the darkness, from the brass guard, which stood up, leaving the button unprotected, to the jelly-like tube at the other end, through which the destroying light would stream. I raised the ray-rod and aimed it.

The light he carried moved in the vault, and the shadow cast by the brick wall went back and forth as Sanson tramped to and fro. He was muttering. He passed the edge of the gap, and the little solar-light shone on my face. But he did not look

toward me, and in a moment he was behind the wall again, and the light died to a glow.

Next time he passed me I would fire. Yet I did not fire, and back and forth, back and forth he tramped, talking to himself as any lesser man might have done. I had no compunction at all; and yet, so diabolical was the fascination he exercised that I could not press the button.

I summoned all my resolution. I would fire when he passed the gap again. My fingers tightened upon the handle. I saw Sanson's head and shoulders emerge, and the spark of light in his hand. The tight, white tunic was right in the center of the aperture. Now! I pressed the button, aiming at his heart.

The glass of the ray-rod grew fiery red. The button seared my hand, and a smell of charred wood filled my nostrils. I dropped the weapon, and it fell clattering upon the ground. Sanson was standing in the aperture, unharmed.

My ray-rod was the one that I had unwittingly discharged on the occasion when I was scrambling from the cellar roof. It had given me life then; now it seemed to have given me death. Of course it was useless till it had been recharged; now it emitted only the red-mull rays; heat, not cold light.

Sanson had passed me without hearing my light movement; he had not seen the glowing tube. But at the sound of the weapon's fall he sprung backward and turned his solar-light on me. His poise was that of a crouching cat. In his left hand he held the light, and in his right was his own ray-rod, covering me.

I looked at him. Something in his poise, in the whitening mane of hair thrown back, something in the man's soul that the years could not conceal reminded me. . . . I stood looking into the face of Herman Lazaroff.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Story of the Cylinders

"SO IT was you, Arnold," said Lazaroff quietly. "Well . . . what do you think of Sir Spofforth's theories now?"

He seated himself on the mud-mound, and his voice was as casual as though we had just returned to the laboratory after escorting Esther home. And indeed I could only with great difficulty convince myself

that I had not fallen asleep and dreamed that nightmare of the twenty-first century.

"You see, it has all come to pass, Arnold," said Lazaroff, twirling the ray-rod between his fingers; "a world such as I foretold, a world set free. Enlightenment where there was ignorance; the soul delusion banished from the minds of all but the most ignorant; the menace of the defective still with us, but greatly shrunken; the logical State so wonderfully conceived by Wells, with science supreme and a world citizenship. It is a glorious free world, Arnold, to which humanity has fallen heir, and the fight for it has been a stupendous one. I have set man, poor plantigrade, on his feet firmly. He looks up to the skies, not in the blind and foolish hope of bodiless immortality, but knowing himself the free heir of the ages. Wasn't it worth the battle, Arnold?"

"Yes, I thought that it must be you as soon as I examined the sheet from the Strangers' Bureau," continued Lazaroff, in a matter-of-fact manner. "I did not think that there could exist two heads like yours within a single century. For your occipital region is excellent, approaching my norm, while your parietals are almost those of a moron. In short, you are a typical Grade 2 defective, Arnold—essentially so; and I have no doubt that, thanks to your five centimeters of asymmetrical frontal area, you have emerged into this universe of reality still fondly clinging to your dualistic soul theory. So you have spent three weeks in London?" he continued, looking sharply at me.

"Yes," I replied.

"And you came back by night to see your birthplace, I suppose," he said maliciously. "I don't know how you escaped the searchlights, unless the men are growing careless. . . . I found one scout-plane to-night without a light, and I shall send its commandant to the leather vats if I discover him. . . . Well, Arnold, I could not believe that you had left your cylinder before your time. You came within an ace of disrupting my world, if you knew what hinges on your emergence—you with your five cubic centimeters of moron cranium! I put implicit faith in Jurgensen's mechanism, and, as it proves, it worked correctly. I was to blame. I came here to-night, seizing the first opportunity I had to get away, to see if you were really gone."

"You knew that I was here?" I cried.

"Why not, Arnold, when I put you here?" he returned, looking at me in a quizzical manner. "I have paid you periodical visits here for the last five and thirty years. It was a difficult situation. I could not remove you, because the people would then have discovered you and put you forward as their Messiah, in accordance with their ridiculous legend. Fancy you as a Messiah! I did not want to dump you into the sea, to be drowned when you awoke. So I did the best thing possible: I covered your cylinder with mud and let you lie here, confident that you would escape notice."

"That Jurgensen timepiece was splendidly contrived, Arnold," he resumed. "Too splendidly, in fact, for, in the haste of sealing you up, I left the pointer six months ahead of time, as well as in Esther's case. It has perhaps occurred to you that you went to sleep in June and awoke in December?"

It had not occurred to me, I confess, but I made no response.

"In fact, Jurgensen, being a Teuton, and therefore, at heart, an idealist, gave me a six months' leeway on his hundred years," said Lazaroff. "When I moved the pointer, I placed it at the end of the dial, taking it for granted that the last point was a hundred, and not a hundred and a half. And then, Arnold, there was another most regrettable mistake. You remember that you were sealed up quickly, and rather impulsively, so to say? I found to-night for the first time that, in hurriedly capping you down, I forgot entirely to add twenty-five days for the leap-years; and so you came back to us that period ahead of Esther. It was a badly bungled arrangement."

"Lazaroff," I began, and then corrected myself with an apology, as I saw his brows contract. "Sanson—"

"Thank you," he replied ironically.

"You will at least answer two or three questions, will you not?" I pleaded. "How did you induce Esther to enter the second cylinder? Why did you trick me? And how have you contrived to outlive the century without appearing a centenarian? You must be twenty-five at least beyond the century. I think my questions are pardonable."

"I will answer them all, Arnold. First, then—but not in the order in which you have asked—it was never my plan to send monkeys into this age. Absurd as it may

sound, I fell in love. Then I planned to take Esther with me. But this plan was overthrown. To be quite frank, I suspected that she preferred you to me. I thereupon bought two more cylinders, and conceived the amusing idea of taking you both with me, in case my suit were rejected, so that our rivalry might be renewed in a world where your advantages of personality would be counterbalanced by my handicap of power. Arnold, I never for an instant doubted that I should stand where I stand to-day. So, having induced you to enter the cylinder—and how I laughed at your imbecile complaisance!—I invited Esther to follow you. There was no difficulty. On the contrary, she could hardly be assured that I was in earnest. However, I speedily convinced her by the simple process of putting on the cap. Then, since the cylinders could be manipulated from within, I had no difficulty in sealing myself within the third.”

“You, Sanson!” I gasped. “You, too, have slept a hundred years?”

His look became envenomed, and the quick gust of passion that came upon him showed a mind unbalanced, in my belief. “Arnold,” he cried, “would you believe that when a man had accomplished an end so carefully planned, so mastered in every detail of its planning, he could be thwarted by an instant’s lack of level-headed sense? You remember that, of the three cylinders, one was set a hundred years ahead? That, save for the six months’ leeway which existed on all the dials, and was therefore immaterial—that one, calculated to the utmost nicety, leap years and all, was the one Esther entered. The dial upon the second cylinder I set in your presence, but I omitted to add the five and twenty days. That was your cylinder. And the third—mine—was set to sixty-five. Do you remember that? Arnold, when I was left alone I entered mine and forgot the dial.

“There is a second vault behind those bricks of which you do not know. I had placed this cylinder there before entering it, for additional safety. I awoke in 1982. When I recovered strength—and I had made provision for a supply of food during that brief period of recovery—I hurried here. I found only your cylinder, hidden behind the fallen bricks. When I saw that it was closed, I thought the mechanism had gone wrong. Then, going back to examine my own, I realized the truth. I, who had

loved Esther with all my power and vowed with all my will to win her—I, a young man of twenty-five, must wait for five and thirty years before she awakened. When my time to claim her came I would be old. Oh, Esther, what I have suffered during these years!”

The baffled passion of half a life-span overcame him, and he broke into pitiful sobs. The tyrant of half the world, greater than any man had ever been before, he had bound himself to a more awful law than any he could contrive. It wrung my heart—the man’s grim hopes and enduring love, checked by so slight a chance.

“I found Esther was gone,” continued Sanson presently, rising and beginning feverishly to pace the vault. “I found that the cylinder containing her had been discovered and adopted as a symbol of the popular cause. I found the world aflame and flung myself into the revolution. By sheer will-power I made myself a leader of men. In six months my dominance was unquestioned. I could have become supreme, but I chose to work through others, that I might have leisure to lay my plans for the reformation of the world. I have made the world better, Arnold, and I have made it free. I chose to serve humanity rather than return into my cylinder to await Esther’s awakening; and now, when at last the reward of my long toil approaches, when at last I can show Esther what I have achieved for her, I am an old man, and the prize has turned to dust and ashes.”

His grief conquered him again, and he paced the vault like a madman.

I flung all prudence to the winds. “Sanson,” I cried, “don’t you see, don’t you understand what the world is to-day? Each age has its own cruelties and wrongs; but if you have abolished poverty, have you not set a heavier yoke upon the people? Their children torn from them, the vivisection table, the death-house for the old——”

He interrupted me harshly. “That is true, Arnold,” he said. “I am a man of kindly instincts, and sometimes I have wavered from my resolution. But this generation must suffer for the sake of future ones. What is death, after all? A painless ending, a placid journey into nothingness, a resolution of the material atoms into new forms. Their children? Arnold, through suffering we win upward. In the world-nation that is to come, the narrow, selfish instinct we call parental love—a mere



OTHERS SPRANG FORWARD, CLAMORING, BESEECHING, SOME SHAKING
THEIR FISTS UNDER HIS FACE AND OTHERS CLUTCHING AT HIS UNIFORM.



MEHEMET SHRUGGED HIS SHOULDERS. THERE WAS NOTHING OF MALICE IN HIS Demeanor. BUT THEY MIGHT AS WELL HAVE PLEADED WITH A ROCK.

trick of our enemy, Nature, to ensure the rearing of the race—will not exist. It will have served its purpose and must yield to the need of the community productivity.

"Yet, Arnold," he resumed, "all that I have done is nothing in comparison with the great secret almost within my grasp. The old problem of consciousness and tissue life on which we worked so long has practically been solved by the means at my disposal in a civilized world. Then we shall live indeed. There will be no need for knowledge to progress painfully through the inheritance of our masters' laboriously won discoveries. We ourselves shall climb the ladder of omniscience. The fit shall live forever, and we shall weed out the moron and the defective at birth, preserving only a race of mortal slaves to labor for us in the factories and in the fields. That is the noble climax of man's aspirations. Immortal life in these bodies of ours, and Esther mine, not for a span, but for eternity!"

I lost all self-control as he uttered these words. "I love her, Sanson!" I cried. "And I mean to win her still! Though all the world lie at your feet, you can never hold me in obedience, nor Esther either! She will die before she yields to you, as I will!"

For an instant I saw his face before me, twisted with all the passions of his thwarted will; then I saw the blinding white light leap from his ray-rod as he fired at me.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Sweep of the Net

"ARNOLD!" whispered a soft voice at my side.

Elizabeth was kneeling by me, and behind her stood David. A multitude of men and women, and children, too, looked at me through the gloom.

"Where am I? Who are all these?" I asked. Then, lighting on a more momentous question, "How long have I been here?"

"Three days, Arnold," whispered Elizabeth.

"Then in two days—two days—" I gasped.

"No, Arnold, to-morrow is the day," said David. "Sanson has proclaimed a meeting in the Temple at sunrise, and it is now late afternoon. We are all in his trap. He must have come upon you unaware and stunned you. He carried you in his arms to the dispatch-plane, where he found Bishop

Alfred awaiting him, and Elizabeth and me, who had gone back to find the old man and could not induce him to return with us. We were helpless, for Sanson was armed and had us at his mercy. I bought a few days' respite by surrendering, and there was even pleasure in the thought that Elizabeth was to be saved from Lembken."

"Where are we, David?" I demanded, struggling up painfully.

"In the vaults where Sanson keeps his morons, Christians, criminals, and dogs, to await the table.

"The table?"

"In the Vivisection Bureau, above."

I looked out through the gloom and heard the howling of the dogs at the far end of the enormous vault.

"Arnold," said David, "this situation would have robbed stronger men of their wits. I am afraid that there is no chance at all for us. One of the Moslem Guards, who knows me, has told me that Sanson is preparing for a holocaust of victims to-morrow, to celebrate his coup. The city is in an uproar, and none knows what will happen; but we shall see nothing of it all. The Moslems are stanch to Sanson. What do they care for all the quarrels of the Nazarenes and infidels? Arnold, all our people know who you are. For their sake you must lead and show us how to die, as the first Christians died. It is hard, my dear boy—"

I knew that he was not thinking of death, but of Esther.

"Yet, perhaps there exists some hope unknown to us," he added. "Your capture has rendered our plans abortive, but God can do what man can not, and our friends have not forsaken us. Now, friends," he added, turning toward the crowd, which circulated slowly within the vault, always following us, "let us show the Guard where our strength lies."

In the vast vault, above the howling, the hymn was raised, old Bishop Alfred leading in a voice singularly sweet. All knelt, and as the balm of prayer fell on my vexed spirit I felt resignation depose despair.

David spoke briefly afterward. He reminded us of the brave traditions of martyrdom and its happy expectancy. We should all face our fate together, in the knowledge that our death would create a revulsion of sentiment which would sweep Sanson from power and restore Christianity to the world. They cried out their

approval, shouted ecstatically, and there was no face but reflected David's dauntless resolution. It was as if some soul of merriment swept over us all, and I saw strangers embracing and clapping hands. Another hymn was sung, and so gaily that a pane in the little window was thrust open, and the dark face of a Moslem sentinel watched us with astonishment and superstitious awe.

At the same time I heard the shouting of a multitude in the courts above.

"Sanson! Sanson! Sanson!" they howled. "Give us immortal life! Out with the tyrant Lembken! Out with the Christian morons! To the Rest Cure—the Rest Cure!—"

The pane was slid back and the guard's face vanished. Darkness was falling.

They had shared with me the bread and water which the guards had brought early that morning, and I forced myself to eat, though I was still sick and dizzy from my wound, for I felt that the end was not yet arrived, and something would intervene. I knew that I should at least see Esther before I died. Gradually the voices in the vault faded. Sometimes a hymn was raised, in which all would join, but mostly we sat in silence, and even the dogs ceased howling. I only felt Elizabeth's presence, and that of David, good, fatherly man, on whom I leaned more than he knew. The sounds now were of the bishop's mumbling voice, as he talked to himself, and the staccato tapping of his crooked stick on the stone floor. I listened to his words.

"They are coming," I heard him say. "They are gathering up the Hamburg fleets. They will be here——"

"Who?" I burst out.

"The Russians," he answered gently. "See, they come. Big men, with bloody crosses on their breasts. Don't you see them?" he continued, turning toward me in the darkness.

A man near me leaped up and peered into the gloom, as if to see. One or two cried out and drew toward the old man, as if his vision could be communicated to them.

Time passed. Many of the captives slept. None of us spoke. I think the sense of each other's presence in the silence was more comforting.

Suddenly there came the sound of bolts being withdrawn, the heavy door at the far end of the vault was opened, and flashing lights shone on us. The dogs, awak-

ened, began to howl once more. There was the stamping of heavy boots upon the stones, and a detachment of the Guard appeared before us. In their leader I recognized Mehemet, the commander of Sanson's forces.

As we blinked at the lights Mehemet spoke a word to each of the men beside him, and they flashed their lights into our faces until they found me. Then Mehemet stepped forward and placed his hand on my shoulder. The soldiers closed about us.

David leaped forward. "You shall not take him alone!" he cried. "Let us go together, all of us. We will go to our death together!"

Others sprang forward, too, men and women, clamoring, beseeching, some shaking their fists under Mehemet's face and others clutching at his uniform. "Take us all!" they cried. "Take us together!"

Mehemet shrugged his shoulders. There was nothing of malice in his demeanor, but they might as well have pleaded with a rock. The captives threw themselves in our way, and the soldiers, reluctant to use their ray-rods without instructions, looked at Mehemet inquiringly.

Then the old bishop came forward. "It is all right," he said gently. "Let him go; he will not come to any harm."

"It is my orders," said Mehemet. "I was to take him as soon as he recovered consciousness."

The soldiers closed about me and began to force their passage through the midst of the prisoners, who, deterred by the bishop's words, no longer offered resistance forcibly. David broke through the guards and seized my hands.

"We shall go together in spirit, Arnold!" he cried. "God bless you! God bless you!" He flung his arms about me, and the soldiers, a little moved by the strange scene, did not restrain him. At the door we halted a moment.

"We shall be with you in your hour, Arnold," said David, fighting back his sobs valiantly. "We shall all think of you when our time comes," he said.

The door was closed behind us, the bolts shot home. In front of me was a flight of winding concrete stairs, dividing at a landing-stage into two parts, running right and left respectively. We took the left ascent. I expected to emerge into the Vivisection Bureau, to see the eager students, and

Sanson, the presiding devil, there. But instead we passed through a gate; the soldiers saluted and filed away, and I found myself standing beside Mehemet in the interior court between the Temple and the Fort of Air-scouts, between the Council Building and the Science Wing.

High overhead the bridges crossed, spanning the gulf in which we stood, and over these I saw once more the palms against the upreared crystal walls.

As I watched I saw the battle-planes take flight once more, one by one, rising like luminous bubbles into the dark night. In the distance London glowed like day. It was not yet midnight.

Behind us, in the outer court, a multitude was shrieking curses on Lembken and the Christians.

"We are going to Sanson?" I asked Mehemet, nerving myself for his affirmative reply. He looked at me gravely. "We are going to the People's House," he answered.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Amaranth

AT THE door in the rear of the Temple building Mehemet placed me in the charge of a waiting air-scout and withdrew. The man indicated that I was to enter the elevator, but he did not step in beside me, and at the top I emerged into a part of the palace that I had never seen before.

I strained my eyes, striving to penetrate the gloom. I took a few steps forward, stretching out my hands. When I stopped and looked back I could not even discern the heavy curtain that had dropped without a sound behind me.

Then swiftly the room was flooded with the soft solar-light. And before me, clothed from head to foot in a sheer, trailing garment of dull gold, stood the girl Amaranth.

Her dark hair was bound back in a loose Grecian knot, her sandaled feet gleamed white on the gold fabric beneath them; she stretched out her white arms to me, and, taking me by the hand, led me to the divan and placed me by her side.

"Poor Arnold!" she began in a caressing tone. "You have suffered so much in your ignorance and your anxiety to help your friends. But all your troubles are ended now, and your friends shall go free. Do you think you can love me, Arnold?"

She looked at me with neither boldness

nor hesitation, and then, folding her arms, drummed her sandal heels against the foot of the divan.

"You need not be afraid to love me, Arnold," she continued, looking at me with curious scrutiny. "Lembken has grown tired of me, and I must have some one to love me. He has taken a fancy to my blue girl, Coral, an absurd little yellow-haired thing. You shall see her."

She clapped her hands twice, and a door that I had not detected in the wall opened. A fair-haired girl, dressed in a loose blue tunic and Turkish trousers, entered, carrying a tray on which were two gold wine-cups.

Amaranth took the nearest cup in her hands.

"Drink with me, Arnold," she said, touching it with her lips and handing it to me.

But I declined. I would not let myself be lulled through wine by the enervating spell that hell cast over me. I handed back the cup.

Amaranth looked at me for an instant with quivering lips. Then she burst into tears, hurled the cup at the maid, snatched up the other and flung that at her also. The first missed her and fell against the base of the wall, where it shed its ruby contents in a widening stain. The second cut the maid's cheek, and the wine drenched the blue tunic.

The maid smiled, biting her lips, stooped down, picked up both goblets, and, placing them on the tray, departed noiselessly. Amaranth sobbed as though her heart were broken. Then she turned wildly upon me.

"Arnold, I love you!" she cried. "You saw Coral? She is Lembken's favorite now, that yellow-haired fool with blue eyes like saucers. Lembken means us for each other. You need not be afraid. Why would you not drink with me?"

I spoke slowly, piecing my words together with infinite care, for on them hung the lives of Esther and all those who had grown dear to me. "Forgive my sullen mood," I said. "You have promised me that my friends shall go free; yet they are awaiting death at sunrise, and it is hard to be at ease. Why was I brought here? How can I save them?"

Amaranth unclasped her hands and turned toward me with a gesture of penitence. "Ah, it was wrong of me to speak



AT THE MOMENT OF SURRENDER, SANSON'S INDOMITABLE WILL FLARED OUT, SO THAT IT SEEMED TO MOLD EACH MUSCLE TO ITS UNCONQUERABLE RESOLVE.

of love first, when you have such a burden of sorrow, Arnold!" she cried. "I had forgotten that men's minds are troubled in the world below. 'Now listen, and I will set your mind at rest. Lembken was hurt by your departure, for he is very sensitive to unkindness, and he asked me to see you on his behalf. Well, all will come right, and you may dismiss your fears. Sanson is in Lembken's power, and to-night there will come an end to all his mad schemes of tyranny. Mehemet and the Guard have abandoned him. Lembken knows everything; he knows all the desperate plans his poor people have made, and to-morrow he means to give freedom to the world.'"

She ceased speaking and listened intently. From the farther room came the faint sound of voices. "Sanson has been with Lembken," she said, rising from the divan. "He is coming this way. Arnold, how would you like to see your enemy broken?"

She led me to the door in the wall through which the girl Coral had come. It was flush with the painted woodwork of the side of the room, and discernible only at a distance of a few paces. I wondered how many such doors were set into the walls of the palace.

"You shall listen here," said Amaranth. "I trust you, Arnold. Whatever you hear, you must not lose your self-control and enter, or all will be lost."

She thrust me behind the door and withdrew, closing it. I heard the rustle of her garment as she crossed the room. She seated herself on the divan.

I was standing in a dim corridor that ran as far as I could see in either direction. Then I heard the sound of stealthy footsteps, and, looking round, saw the maid, Coral, coming softly toward me. She was carrying the tray, with two full wine-cups, and she stopped in front of me and set it down upon the floor.

She stood looking at me. Her eyes were blazing with passion, and her slim body shook under the blue tunic. On her mouth was the same set smile that I had seen when she picked up the goblets. She did not speak, but, placing her hand against the door, opened it an inch or two, not making the slightest sound. At that moment I heard the inside curtain lifted, the rustle of Amaranth's robes, and a lithe tread on the rugs. Then I heard Sanson's voice.

"I have said all that there is to say," he replied to some question almost inaudible. "Why do you plead with me? Do you think a woman can move me when Lembken has failed?"

"Listen, Sanson!" Amaranth answered with fierceness in her tones. "When Boss Rose climbed to power he built the People's House and made it his pleasure palace. Then he died under a murderer's dagger, and Lembken, who had long envied him, came here in his place. He, too, lived his life. Now his power is broken likewise. You, the next ruler of the world—why do you not do as Lembken did? We are tired of him. We want a new lord, Sanson.

"Sit by me, Sanson! Do you not see how you have toiled while Lembken has taken his ease? Which was the better part? What have you gained? You have waited so long for one woman. Oh, yes, I know; all a man's secrets are known everywhere, though he thinks he has guarded them in the innermost sanctuary of his own heart. You can take her—but take us too. Take me too. Live your life, Sanson. You are not too old for love. Save us and reign here. Take me, Sanson; see, I fling myself at your feet. Now take me—take me—drink with me. A pledge to our love!"

Amaranth clapped her hands twice. Instantly the girl Coral stooped down, pushing me fiercely from the door, and, taking up the tray, entered the room. Amaranth took the brimming wine-cup and touched it with her lips, as she had done with me.

"Drink, Sanson, my love!" she murmured.

I saw Sanson stagger to his feet from the divan, on which he had sunk, and raise the cup in his hand. He did not drink, but stood like a man asleep, all movement inhibited by the fierceness of that inner struggle. The conqueror of the world was fighting with this girl of twenty for all he had won. Amaranth seized the second cup from the tray and raised it on high.

"To our love, Sanson!" she exclaimed exultantly, and drained it.

At that moment I perceived that the jagged cut on the maid's face had become strangely conspicuous. She was holding the empty tray, and she looked at Amaranth and smiled. She stood like a tinted statue; there was not the least tremor of any muscle.

Sanson had not drunk yet; he still held

the cup in his hand, and he was himself as immobile as Coral.

"Will you not drink my pledge?" asked Amaranth, laying her fingers lightly upon his arm, and looking up into his face.

And I had underestimated Sanson, after all. Now, at the moment of surrender, his indomitable will flared out, so that it seemed to possess his body and mold each muscle to its unconquerable resolve.

"I will not drink!" he cried, and flung the cup on the floor.

He turned and strode out of the room, exultant, like the conqueror he was. The curtain fell behind him. He had won his hardest battle, taken unaware, fighting against a cunning ambush, and I knew that hardly an earthly enemy could overcome him now.

I was in the room. There was no need to hide myself any longer. I watched Amaranth, who, statuesque as Sanson had been, stood looking after him. A minute passed.

Suddenly she wheeled about and clapped her hands to her side. She staggered, regained her poise; a spasm of pain crossed her face, and she looked at Coral searchingly. The maid in the blue tunic looked back at her, smiling.

Their eyes were unwavering till Amaranth swayed backward and fell on the divan. A scream broke from her lips—another—silence—a third; she wrung her hands and moaned.

I knelt before the stricken girl. "Amaranth!" I cried. "What is it?"

She raised herself and stared wildly at me. Her face was ashen pale, the features pinched, dark rings had crept beneath her eyes. "She gave me the—wrong cup," she whispered.

I tried to run for aid, but she clung to me, sobbing. "There is no hope," she cried. "I must die! No hope! Stay, Arnold!"

Her head fell back, and she breathed heavily. I turned and saw Coral beside me, a smiling, waxen doll, the new queen of the harem beside the dying one.

"Go!" I thundered at her.

She shrugged her shoulders daintily and went, leaving the wine-cups on the floor.

Amaranth's hand trembled upon my sleeve. I bent over her. Her eyes, which

were closed, opened and fixed themselves upon mine again.

"Put your hand under me," she muttered. "Raise me. All is lost now. Sanson has beaten Lembken and everything is ended. Save your Elizabeth if you can."

She drew my face down to hers and spoke in sobbing gasps: "It was Lembken's plot. He learned that Sanson had you in the vaults. His case was desperate. He asked Mehemet's aid. Mehemet said that his men would not abandon Sanson while he lived; but if he died they would follow Lembken in return for what he promised them. I was to poison Sanson and then the Guard would go over. Lembken had been in communication with the American bosses. The plan—the plan——"

She turned to me and gathered all her strength with the last effort of will. "The plan was of long standing. Events hastened it. Mehemet knew it. Britain was to become Mohammedan, and the American Mormons were to unite with us, under one rule. The two faiths are almost the same. The people wanted a God, and this would give one to the world and unite all nations. It would unite all against the Christian Russians. They are in Berlin. The American battle-planes are on their way to help us against them. I was to keep you here—drug you, not poison you—a drug that would have made you obey Lembken and go into the Temple without knowing what you were doing. Now you must go. Try to save your Elizabeth. Kill Sanson. I can say no more. Escape——"

She muttered some words I could not hear, and then her eyes opened for the last time and fixed themselves upon mine with a look that I shall never forget. "I loved you, Arnold," she said in a weak but clear voice. "I'm glad I died before I lost you. I used to wish that I had been born in other days . . . the twentieth-century days, when . . . life was romantic . . . all different . . . men mated once only. . . . Give the people those days again if you beat Sanson, Arnold."

She tried to stretch out her hands to me. Her eyelids fluttered, and she sighed very deeply.

I saw a crimson stain upon my hands. It was the wine from Sanson's wine-cup.

The last instalment of "The Messiah of the Cylinder" will appear in the September number.



THE MESSIAH OF THE CYLINDER

By Victor Rousseau

ILLUSTRATED BY JOSEPH CLEMENT COLL

THE story begins a short time before the outbreak of the great world war, and Arnold Pennell, who tells it, is projected into the next century by means of a vacuum cylinder equipped with a time-clock set at a hundred years. The cylinder is the idea of Herman Lazaroff, a brilliant young materialist who looks forward to a scientific world freed of faith and humanitarianism. Lazaroff is associated in a biological laboratory with Arnold, and the two men are both in love with their chief's daughter, Esther. One evening Lazaroff takes the other two into a secret cellar to show them three vacuum cylinders, in which, he professes, he means to seal up some monkeys and send them on a hundred years. By way of jest, he induces Arnold to enter one of the cylinders—and immediately the automatic cap shuts him in.

When Arnold regains consciousness, he is in a desperate state of weakness and bewilder-

ment; but he is able to struggle out of the opened cylinder. Finally, the hideous truth dawns on him that he has been unconscious for a century. He makes his way outside at last, and is presently seen by an aviator, who asks him strange questions, and carries him to London. This is a city he never dreamed of—buildings fifty stories high, all dazzling white, moving streets roofed with crystal, people strangely dressed. Arnold is conducted to the Strangers' House, and David, the Strangers' Guard, explains to him this curious life he has entered. David tells him that the world, except for a few countries, is ruled by Science, that faith is dead, and that the Federation of nations is dominated by two men—Boss Lembken and Doctor Sanson.

Arnold is secretly summoned to the Temple, and here he makes the astounding discovery that the Temple Goddess is his sweetheart

Esther, sleeping in the second cylinder. Leaving her, Arnold tries to make his way to Sanson. He is seized and conducted to Boss Lembken's Palace. Here Lembken shows him his gardens, and gives him a house, where Arnold finds David's daughter, Elizabeth, locked in. Believing him base, Elizabeth tries to kill him; finally she is convinced of his friendship; and when he escapes by means of a ladder hanging from a scout-plane, which has rescued her, she defends him against her father. In the Air-scouts' Fortress Arnold learns that David and Elizabeth belong to a company of Christian rebels, who are determined to overthrow Sanson. Arnold, pledging loyalty, is told that he will learn that night his own place in their plan.

A meeting of the faithful follows, in the cellar where the cylinders had been hidden. Here, Arnold is declared the Messiah; and here he learns that, to overthrow Sanson, negotiations are first to be made with Lembken. He offers to act as emissary, but before he starts encounters Sanson, who, he discovers later, is visiting the chapel to see if Arnold has left his cylinder. He also discovers that Sanson is Herman Lazaroff; that he entered the third cylinder, set at sixty-five years, and that he has conquered the world, while waiting for Esther to awake. When Sanson finds that Arnold also loves her he takes him prisoner, knocking him insensible with a ray-rod. Arnold regains consciousness in the vaults below the Vivisection Bureau. With him are David and Elizabeth who have also been captured. Suddenly, Mehemet, the leader of the Guard, appears and takes Arnold to Amaranth, one of Lembken's favorites. She makes love to him, and by her wiles nearly persuades him to drink wine so drugged that it would have placed him in Lembken's power. Being unsuccessful, she gives him the chance to listen, while she similarly entertains Sanson. He refuses to drink with her, and leaves, but she has drained the second cup, which, by the planning of a jealous maid, is the poisoned one intended for Sanson. Amaranth dies telling Arnold to kill Sanson, as his only hope for better days.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Heart of the People

I LEFT the dead girl on the divan and went out into the hall. I had grown suddenly composed, and all my doubts had vanished in the face of the single duty of saving Esther.

The corridor into which I stepped was as empty as the palace hall above. The air-scouts who should have been on duty here were gone. Before me was a door, leading into one of the numerous small rooms through which one entered the Temple

itself, and at my side was a little window, through which the cries of the mob below came fitfully.

I pushed open the swinging door in front of me, ran through the room, and found myself inside the dark, enormous area of the Temple. I was in a circular gallery, surrounded by a brass railing, which ran high up around the interior. It was quite dark, except for a single solar light that burned across the gulf. Beneath it I could discern the shining, golden surface of the Ant.

I felt my way around the gallery, working toward the light, which dropped, apparently, as I approached it until, standing immediately overhead, I looked down and saw it shining under me. It showed the uplifted tentacle of the idol, the edge of the stone altar in the center of the bridge that spanned the Temple, and the body of the cylinder, which seemed to hang in space above.

I had entered the Temple upon a floor one stage too high. But I could wait no longer. The light might have been, I estimated, some twenty feet underneath. I swung myself from the brass rail and dropped into space. It was a mad impulse in the dark toward that slender bridge more than one hundred feet above the Temple floor. But fate was with me, for I struck the golden grill around the altar stone and tumbled inside, rising upon my feet bruised, but otherwise unhurt.

The grill was about four feet high, and the ends formed gates which, when opened, made the altar stone continuous with the bridge-spans that extended to meet it from either side of the building. It formed thus a sort of keystone to the eye, although not architecturally, since it did not uphold the spans, which seemed to be constructed on the principle of the cantilever. I saw now that it was suspended from the roof by steel chains, and over it, hung by two finer ones, was the cylinder.

At once I grasped the purport of this mechanism. Cylinder and altar stone were in counterpoise, so that, when the first was drawn up, the second would descend to the level of the Ant's pedestal, forming, as it were, a sacrificial stone immediately before the idol, and at the same time disrupting the continuity of the bridges.

But these perceptions were a matter of only a minute fraction of time. I looked through the cylinder's face of glass, and, though I could discern only the ~~dim~~ outlines

of her features, I knew that I had won Esther, and that there was to be no more parting, so long as we both lived.

I stretched my hand up, feeling for the cylinder cap. It was still on the body, but it had almost reached the end of the thread, and moved from side to side under my fingers. I could twist it from the thread without much effort. If I did so . . . Sanson, when he was Lazaroff, had told me that it would bring death, but surely not on the ninth day after it was loosened. Air must have been entering the cylinder in measurable quantities for more than a week. And if Esther died—better that than that she should awaken in Sanson's arms.

It was a terrific choice. I hesitated only a few moments, but during these I lived through a century of agony. Then I set my fingers to the cap, wrenched it free, and flung it from me. It flew through the air and tinkled upon the floor far beneath. And, hardly venturing to breathe, I clung to the cylinder and waited.

No sound came from within. I tried to place my ear against the open head to listen.

At last, mad with anxiety, I managed to swing the cylinder toward me by the chains, tilting it downward until I got a purchase on it. I bore with my full weight upon the metal edge. I plunged my arms within. I felt the heavy coils of Esther's hair, her eyelids, cheek, and chin—I drew her forth somehow; but how I contrived this I do not know, for the platform and cylinder rocked fearfully as they swung. Then, in a moment, it seemed, I held her light and wasted body against my own, and we were together upon the rocking altar stone, while the cylinder swung rhythmically above, passing our heads in steady, sweeping flights as I crouched with Esther in my arms behind the golden grille.

I pressed my lips to hers, I chafed her hands and pleaded with her to awake. And then, as if in answer to my prayer, I heard a sigh—so faint that I could hardly dare believe I heard it. A deeper sigh, a sobbing breath—she lived; and with awed happiness I felt her thin arms grope instinctively toward my neck. She knew.

I knelt beside her on the altar stone, listening with choked sobs and wildly beating heart to the words that came in faltering whispers from her lips.

"Herman! What have you done? You have killed him! Then kill me too! I don't

want to live, Herman. Kill me, kill me, you murderer! Oh, Arnold, my love, to think that neither of us knew!"

"Esther," I whispered, bending over her, "it is I. It is Arnold."

I saw her eyelids half open; she moaned, and I interposed my body between her and the light. Faint though it was, I knew that it was intolerable.

The faintest smile of happiness framed itself about her mouth. "Arnold," she whispered, "I have been with you all the time. I dreamed . . . Herman had sent you . . . a hundred years . . . but now I shall sleep and forget."

I knew the mighty grip of that first sleep. I caught her up in my arms—she weighed no more than a small child—and hurried across the bridge. I believed that the outer door upon this level communicated with the bridge over the interior court by which one might pass to the Air-scouts' Fortress.

I traversed the little room and pushed the swing door open. Before me was an elevator shaft, evidently that through which I had made my first journey to Lembken's palace. But as I emerged into the corridor I saw, not ten paces away, their backs toward me, a couple of Moslem Guards.

I was too late. The guard had occupied the posts abandoned by the air-scouts. The Temple and all the approaches to Lembken's palace were in Sanson's hands.

But they had not heard me, and in an instant I was back in the little room. There remained one hope. By crossing the bridge and passing through the priests' robing-room upon the other side of the Temple, I could reach all parts of the building. Perhaps it was only the approaches to the palace that the guard watched and there was no sentry posted in the gallery above the auditorium.

I carried Esther upon the bridge again. As I was about to set foot upon the altar stone, which had almost ceased to rock, I fancied that the bridge itself was moving. I leaped upon the stone, stumbling over the grille and falling. One moment I hesitated before arising, to assure myself that Esther was still breathing. A piece of her dress had come away in my hand like burned paper. I raised her in my arms, so that her head rested upon my shoulder, and opened the gate of the grille to step upon the second span.

There was no footing. Swiftly, noiselessly, the span was swinging away from me,

pivoting upon its farther end. It was already too far distant for me to leap, encumbered as I was. I glanced back in horror. The span that I had crossed was moving also, the two acting, apparently, in unison to the same mechanism. They vanished in the obscurity of the Temple.

I stood with Esther in my arms upon the altar slab, poised on that unsteady resting-place. There was no refuge anywhere.

As I stood there the solar light went out.

The Temple remained dark. Crouched on the quivering stone, helpless in Sanson's power, I was not conscious of fear. Rather I felt a melancholy regret that this was the end. A hundred years of separation, the knowledge of each other's love; and it had all gone for nothing. Yet there was happiness in that this much had been granted me, to die with Esther in my arms; and the disappearance of all hope brought calmness to my spirit, and acceptance of the inevitable.

It was hours later when I began to hear the cries of the mob. Then, through every swinging door below, invisible forms came trooping in until they filled the whole of the vast floor. They shouted against the Christians in an unceasing pandemonium, and the walls and roof reechoed that infernal din until another spirit, something of awed expectancy, swept over the multitude, and the last shout ceased, and a new and dreadful silence replaced the outcries. Out of the silence, a low chant began. It was that chant which I had heard before, begun spontaneously and crooned at first by a few and then by many, tossed back and forward from side to side of the Temple floor, until all caught it up and made the walls echo.

"We are immortal in the germ-plasm; make us immortal in the body before we die."

There was a dreadful melody, one of those tunes that seem to rise spontaneously to a nation's lips as the outpouring of its aspirations. Again and again that dreadful, hopeless chant rose from the floor, and swelled into a din, and died.

Then shouts broke out again as the mob-spirit seized upon its victims here and there.

"Make us immortal in these bodies of ours!"

"Make us immortal, Sanson!"

"Give me eternal life!" raved the cracked voice of an aged man; and that blasphemy against Nature seemed to shock the mob into silence until once more the low chant swelled and echoed and died away in wailing overtones of hopelessness.

Suddenly a single solar light flashed at one side of the Temple; and high above the multitude, where the end of one span of the bridge rested against the curving wall, I saw Sanson. He was standing alone at the extreme end of the span, which, shadowy and vague, gave him the aspect of a figure poised in the air.

Sanson uttered no word, but stretched out his arm and pointed across the Temple. Then I heard the tramp of men coming from the direction of the elevator shafts that led to Lembken's palace. And suddenly, a second light burned across the vast void of the dark.

Upon the second span, now dimly visible, drawn back against the wall facing Sanson, I saw the captives from the vaults, marshaled under the charge of the armed guards. There, at the extreme edge, Elizabeth stood, a slender, virginal figure, her hands clasped against her bosom; at her side David, and behind them the patriarchal figure of Bishop Alfred. Behind him were ranged the other victims of Sanson's rage. They, too, under that single light, seemed to be poised in air.

At the sight of them hysteria swept the mob into frenzy. "The Christians!" they screamed. "Kill them! Kill them! Cure! To the table! Ah-h!"

The groaning end was drawn out as the long vibration of a G-string that quivers after the finger has been removed. The air was heavy and foul with hate.

Surely Sanson's stage-craft was working well. The man stood there at the extremity of the drawn-back span, facing his victims across the void. He raised one hand, and every voice grew still.

"I have called you together, citizens, upon this anniversary of the world's liberty," he said, "because the time has come again to choose. I have given you freedom, I have given you peace, I have enlightened you and raised you to man's own dignity. The Christians used to say that man was half ape and half that mythical vertebrate known as the angel. I have driven the ape out of you and made you all angel—that is to say, all man, standing on his own feet, not leaning against imaginary gods to prop him. It has been a difficult battle, and all the vested evils in the world have fought against me. But I have won; your God, your Christ, the superstitious, stubborn heart of man have yielded. There remains one more enemy."

"Death!" screamed a woman's shrill voice. "Make us immortal in our beautiful bodies, Sanson. Give us everlasting life!"

"The Ant!" pursued the speaker patiently.

It was an unexpected anticlimax. The crowd groaned in disappointment, and the silence ensuing was of unutterable grief. That Sanson would bestow this boon upon them, all had believed.

Sanson was too shrewd not to perceive that he had struck the wrong note. He swung himself about, facing the captives on the opposite span, and his voice reverberated through the Temple.

"There is no Ant, no God!" he cried. "But there is Freedom, hidden within the cylinder where she has lain since the beginning of time, waiting for this day to dawn. Now she is ready to emerge into a world set free!"

He stood there, a dramatic figure, the incarnation of rebellious pride. But, as he paused, the cracked voice of the old bishop piped through the Temple.

"I can give you eternal life, my people," he cried. "I have the Word that alone can set you free. It is the same that Bonham spoke to you in Westminster Hall while he was burning. You heard him and went home, and some wondered and some were afraid; but that Word never dies, and it will be told soon in a million homes, because, by God's mercy, the Russians are at hand to set you free."

The deep-breathed "Ah!" that followed was not of hate but of fear. Something was stirring in the hearts of the multitude, molding them against knowledge and will. I felt it too; a mighty spiritual power, a light that cleft the darkness. I saw the old man stand out at the end of the span and shake his fist at Sanson, silent opposite.

"You can not raise one finger except by the will of Him whom you deny, Sanson," he said. "You are not going to make any sacrifices. You, who have raised your will against Heaven—this night your soul will be required of you."

The sense of something imminent and mighty shook my limbs so that I could hardly hold Esther to me. I stood up against the grille and clung to it with one hand. There was no sound at all within the Temple now. Protagonists in their eternal drama, the bishop and Sanson faced each other.

Suddenly I perceived that the solar light above the bishop had moved. It had moved outward; now it was approaching me. And the light above Sanson was moving too. I understood what was happening. Sanson had quietly given the command for the bridges to be swung together.

An instant later the little lights that crossed the gloom were dissipated as ten thousand lights flashed out, illumining the vast interior. I saw the packed multitudes below, thousands on thousands, their faces upturned, each with the same stamp of fear on it. I saw the groins and arches, the gallery above, filled with the Guard; Sanson upon one nearing span, his Moslems round him; upon the other David, and Elizabeth with her slender figure and the clasped hands, and Bishop Alfred and the remaining captives. I waited, my arms about Esther.

I heard once more a universal sigh float upward. Then the woman's voice that had called out before screamed piercingly:

"The Messiah has come, who is to make us free!"

I saw Sanson stiffen and stagger backward among his guards. I saw David, an arm's length from me, staring, Elizabeth with wide-open eyes, the bishop's calm visage, the Moslems motionless as effigies.

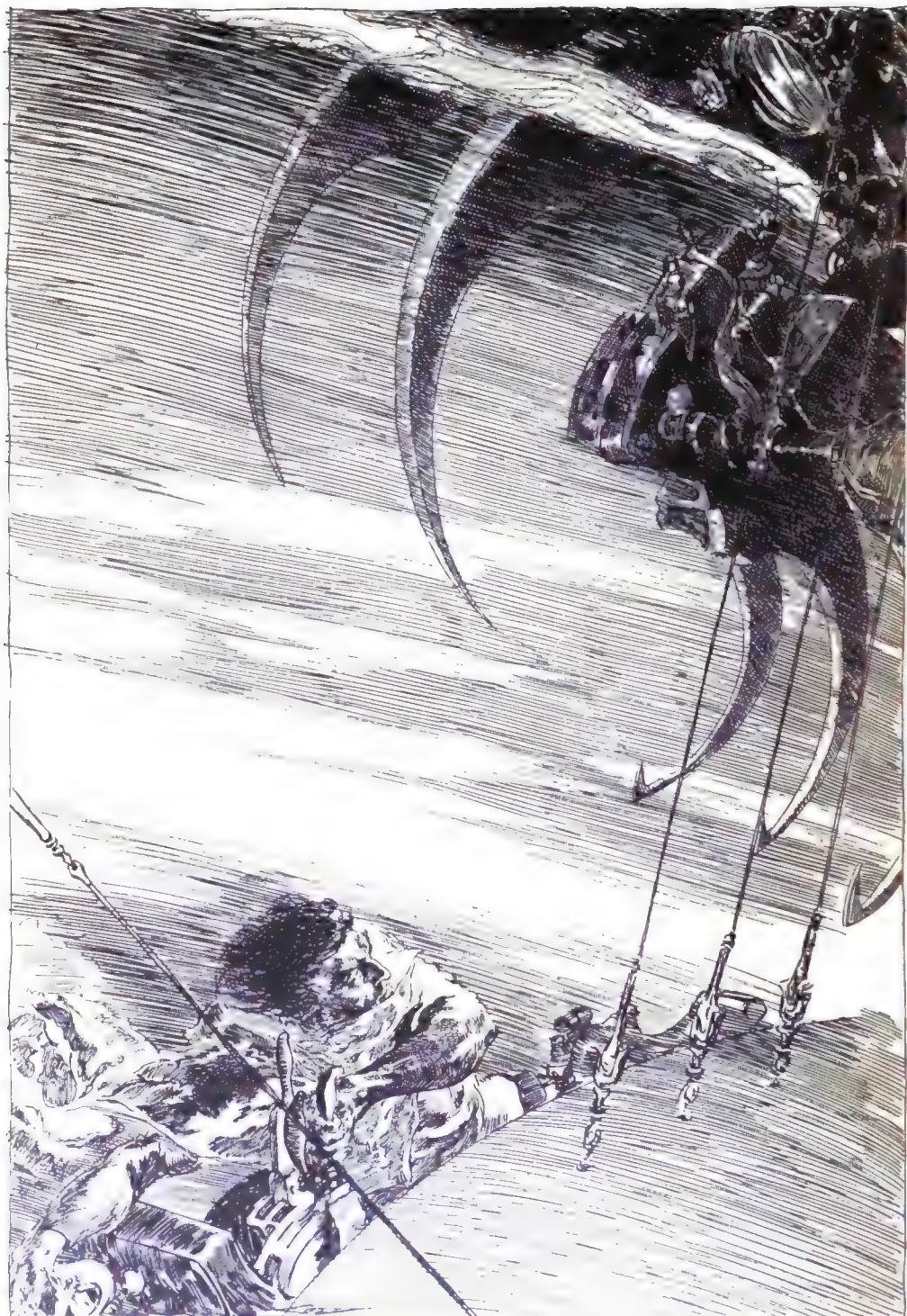
Then, as if the power that held the populace in unison were suddenly dissolved, they broke from their places. They sprang with exultant cries toward the Ant; they formed a dozen human chains that reared themselves above the pedestal, dissolved, and poured over the golden idol. Among them I saw clusters of men—our men—with ray-ods in their hands. They swarmed up pillars and reached out their arms toward the captives. They howled at Sanson, whose guards gathered around him closely. The conspiracy had not miscarried.

But all were shouting at me; the fanatic spirit of hate which Sanson had evoked seemed to have recoiled and turned on him to his destruction.

Suddenly the approaching spans stood still. They remained fixed in the air an instant, the end of each some half a dozen feet away. Then, slowly, they began to recede.

"Jump, Arnold!" I heard David scream above the uproar.

I saw the plan to isolate us there, where none could reach us, helpless in the mid-Temple. I gathered Esther high into my arms, stepped back, and sprang. I felt



THE GIGANTIC CLAWS UPON OUR AIR-PLANE Gaped. WE DASHED FOR
SANSON WITH TERRIFIC FORCE.

myself falling into space. Still clutching my burden with one arm, I groped in blindness with my free hand outstretched. I struck the edge of the span. Hands held me; hands pulled Esther away. I stood upon my feet among the prisoners, and behind us already our rescuers were fighting back the Guard.

I saw the tattered figures of the outlaws everywhere. Only around Sanson the guard still held their own. He saw the situation; he knew that his own power was crumbling as Lembken's power had crumbled, and, pushing his bodyguard aside, he strode through them and held up his hand for silence. At the gesture every movement within the Temple seemed arrested; I saw ray-rods, not yet fired, held stiffly, arms halted in the air, necks craned toward the speaker.

"Choose!" Sanson called in tones that rang like trumpet blasts. "It is your supreme moment. Will you have your Messiah or will you have my gift—immortality?"

"Give us God!" screamed the woman's voice; and then a thousand and ten thousand answered him.

"Give us God!"

"Give us the God of Bonham!"

"The God of our fathers whom we have denied!"

The people had responded truly in their supreme moment, as they must always, that the world may not cease. For, in the words of Renan, "The heart of the common people is the great reservoir of the self-devotion and resignation by which alone the world can be saved."

CHAPTER TWENTY

Lembken Makes His Exit

THE maneuvers of the revolutionists had been so skilfully planned and carried out so surely that the Temple was in our hands five minutes after the attack began. Entering upon the side that faced the Air-scouts' Fortress, where numbers had lain in concealment, armed with three or four ray-rods apiece, they had surprised and overpowered the guards posted about the elevators and driven them in flight toward the Science Wing, into which Sanson withdrew with as many Moslems as he could collect about him.

The Council Hall and offices beneath it

were occupied as speedily. With the Air-scouts' Fortress, we had thus three-fourths of the quadrilateral in our possession, the strength of the Guard being concentrated in the Science Wing and the enclosing double wall which was their chief reliance and our principal objective, armed, as it was, with the heavy ray-guns and commanding all the four buildings within its cincture.

The change of fortune was so swift that I could hardly grasp the significance of what was happening. Carrying Esther and surrounded by a frenzied mob, I was drawn along the bridge toward the corridor of the elevators, between Elizabeth and David, pent up among the throng—some on their way through the Temple to attack the Science Wing, others returning, hopeless of the attempt, and more, merely spectators, unarmed, and gone mad with delirious joy. The confusion was indescribable, and, to make it worse, these people seemed to be looking to me for leadership, and I could not stir among the packed multitude. Precious moments were passing.

At the entrance to the room that gave on the corridor a band of disciplined men appeared, armed, and headed by a man who struggled in vain to gain the bridge as the mob forced him and his followers backward.

"Follow me!" he screamed. "To the Science Wing! Capture the bridges! Follow me!"

As he spoke the Temple lights went out behind us. I was still on the bridge. Inch by inch I struggled onward, but in the darkness the confusion was still more undisciplined; and while the oncoming party still struggled desperately to force a passage through our midst, I heard a rending, straining sound behind me, a crash of splintering wood, a mighty fall that set the whole Temple echoing. Shouts, oaths, and screams came from below, and the span on which we stood shook violently from the concussion.

There was no need to inquire what had occurred. Sanson had cut down the farther half of the bridge and secured himself against attack from the top floors of the Temple.

Then a voice bellowing with blended triumph and ferocity uprose. "Follow me!" it howled. "Seize the elevators! To Lembken! To the People's House!"

The mob broke and dissolved, carrying me with it into the lighted corridor. I saw

the leader with the Assyrian beard heading the rush for the elevator-shafts. He carried all with him. The shafts were empty; the elevators, wrecked by the palace party, lay, twisted heaps of steel, at the bottom of their wells. There went up screams of rage.

While we halted there the corridor lights went out also.

"Lembken!" howled the mob. "Out with him! To the People's House!"

Some men appeared with solar torches, casting a faint illumination along the corridor. The half-light made the furious mob resemble a crowd of devils. One impulse animated all. They plunged into the shafts after their leader, scrambling up the iron-work of the interior and clinging there as they worked their way upward. Presently howls of triumph, echoing down from above, indicated that they had reached the summit unchecked. The little band of disciplined men alone stood still, and their leader turned to me with a wry expression.

"Sanson has got his men together," he said. "We shall have to storm the wing from below. Half our forces have joined in that wild attack upon Lembken, who is helpless to hurt us, whereas Sanson——"

He shrugged his shoulders despairingly.

David came up to me. "You must bring them back, Arnold," he said. "They will obey and follow you. Leave Esther——"

He saw the look on my face and began to plead with me. "It is your duty, Arnold," he said. "All will be jeopardized unless you can draw off our forces. I will protect her with my life." He bent down and looked into Esther's face, and an expression of amazement came on his own. It occurred to me afterward that he had never believed that Esther was alive inside the cylinder. But at the moment the thought only flashed through my mind and yielded to more urgent ones. "They will follow you. For the sake of the cause, Arnold!" David cried.

I hesitated no longer. I placed Esther's unconscious body in Elizabeth's arms, and, without stopping to glance at her, lest it should sap my resolution, I plunged within the shaft and began to scramble upward.

I reached the summit and fell on the floor of the palace hall, the last of those who had ascended. The mob was swarming everywhere, in every room and through the gardens. I ran out under the dome. The sun shone through a gray fog, a blood-red ball

of fire. It was high in the heavens; it must have been ten in the morning, and I had thought it still dawn,

The yelling throng swept through the groves. Its fury was unleashed, and the remembered wrongs of years impelled it to universal destruction. I saw at a glance that these men could never be restrained till they had wrought their will. With their hands they tore up the palms and tossed them down upon the courts through jagged holes in the transparent walls. They tore the panes out of their settings, twisting the sheer, unsplintering glass until it writhed everywhere, coiled crystal snakes among the uprooted flowers. They spared nothing. The roof was already bare.

I ran among them, calling them to follow me back, for the people's sake, to join their comrades below, hard-pressed by Sanson. Most of them did not seem to hear me; some turned their heads, stared at me, and resumed their wild work of ruin. Not one in a hundred of these men had seen my face more than a moment on the altar platform.

I turned and ran through the palace rooms, still calling, and still unheeded. The mob was sweeping through the palace like a human avalanche. It had torn the costly hangings from the walls. From blue rooms, mull rooms, red rooms, purple and gold and all the baroque, fantastic, and depraved trappings of Lembken's gleaming were heaped into great rolls at which the furious army hacked and tore.

In one place it was venting its rage upon a heap of masquerade clothing. This was flung from man to man, and some, tearing rents in the garments, thrust their heads through them and continued in the pursuit, with shirts about their shoulders and animals' skins about their bodies.

A tun of wine had overturned and spilled, and the contents crept like a rivulet along the floor, seeping from room to room. The conduit that fed the artificial brooks, being slashed, poured out a muddy stream that dogged our heels, befouling the rugs and tattered coverlets. Clods of earth clung to walls, mud bespattered everything. And ever the cries became more furious.

I followed breathless, imploring, pleading in vain. No one paid me attention. Some scowled at me and flung me away, some made to question me, but the spirit of destruction, seizing them before the words were framed on their lips, hurled them

along. They swept me with them. At our head was the Assyrian bearded giant, bellying in frantic wrath. The mob followed him as if hypnotized, and he, armed with a spiked stanchion which he must have wrenched from some part of the wall supports, dashed his furious assaults upon each door and shattered it, leading the chase down every corridor of the bewildering place, returning, hot on the scent, dog-like, tongue-tip thrust between his teeth and his great arms threshing the club from side to side.

The palace was enormous. We had not covered half of it, and we had seen no one. But, as we ran, shouts came from another party in another quarter, roars mingled with shrieks for mercy, and, keening above all clamor, that bloodhound cry that bursts from human throats when the death hunt draws near to its finale.

With an answering roar the mob sprang forward, battering down doors and wrenching for themselves weapons from shattered furniture and woodwork of the walls. The quarry was found. Like bolting hares, turned and sent scurrying back into the small, hidden room, they crouched, women and negro slaves, still wearing the masquerade of the revels that Lembken had held that night when his world empire broke loose from his power. Horned women, women in dominoes, in striped and spotted hides, in Grecian garb, mænads and nuns, sailor boys, harem hanoums, Elizabethans wearing hooped skirts and huge starched neck-frills, Victorians with parasols and bodies compressed by corsets, a motley, cowering crew, less abject only than the cringing, miserable blacks, eyed their pursuers with terror-stricken looks that sought their faces for pity and found only hate.

The giant leaped out before his followers and scanned the faces, whirling his spiked club. "Where is he?" he roared. "Lembken and all his men, and the rest of you?"

"There are no men," a frightened woman gasped. "There were never any men but Lembken. We have never seen any others in our lives."

He had lied to me, then, when he spoke of his friends. How long would it have been before I drank the poisoned cup if I had trusted him? I felt my own wrath and hatred become as implacable as that of the mob.

The giant clutched a cringing negro

from the floor. "Where is he?" he shouted.

The man was too tongue-tied from fear to answer him. But a woman stepped forward bravely. "There!" she said, pointing to a door.

The mob whirled through in a torrent. I heard their shouts grow fainter. The women bolted, scattering through the dismantled rooms, seeking each her own refuge. But one stopped and came quickly up to me.

"She lied. He is there," she whispered, pointing toward the wall. "Kill him, and whisper my name in his ear before he dies."

I looked at the girl and recognized Coral, the maid who had supplanted Amaranth. I do not know what impulse animated me. I had no wish to kill the monster, but my eyes found the hidden door, flush with the wall, and I opened it and ran through.

The door closed behind me and a lock clicked. I did not hesitate, but ran along a winding passage, hearing the faint, distant shouting, and emerged suddenly upon a little platform fronting a portion of the crystal wall that was still standing in the rear of the palace. There was a brick wall on either side, and the mob had not yet discovered this secret egress.

A glass door in the wall stood open, and outside, at rest in the air, I saw the dark dispatch-plane with Hancock at the wheel. And at the gate, hesitating to set his feet upon the narrow plank that led to safety, was Lembken. His arms were filled with bundles, and on his shoulder a monkey perched, mouthing and gibbering. And at his side knelt a young girl, with her hands clasped, urging him to flight.

The old man heard me and swung round. I saw Hancock start, raise a ray-rod, and aim it at me. But Lembken was between us, and he did not dare to fire.

The girl leaped at me, clutching me by the arms with surprising strength, and crying to Lembken to fly. But the obese old man only stared into my face. Fear seemed to have paralyzed him. He did not know me, but my presence seemed to awaken some association in his mind, and, as I watched, I saw it flash into his consciousness.

"Jacquette!" he screamed, in a falsetto tremolo. "I have forgotten her. I must go back."

He scrambled past me, and the girl, releasing me, followed him. On we ran, till Lembken turned into a tiny room, once



THEY CROUCHED, WOMEN AND NEGRO SLAVES, STILL WEARING THE MASQUERADE OF THE REVELS THAT LEMBKEN HAD HELD THAT NIGHT WHEN HIS EMPIRE BROKE LOOSE.



THE ASSYRIAN-BEARDED GIANT LEAPED OUT BEFORE HIS FOLLOWERS, AND SCANNED THE FACES, WHIRLING HIS SPIKED CLUB. "WHERE IS HE?" HE ROARED. "LEMBKEN AND ALL HIS MEN?"

meant to be a hiding-place, no doubt, but now without a door, and bare. Again I heard the shouting. The mob was drawing near.

On a perch beside the entrance sat the gaudy macaw, head on one side, muttering as she preened her feathers. "The People's Friend," she cackled. "The People's Friend. Friend—friend—friend—friend—frien'—"

With a cry of delight Lembken snatched at her. She fluttered to his shoulder. He turned, and, with monkey and bird against his sagging cheeks, he began to make his way along the passage, the girl clinging to him. As we ran, I saw another corridor at right angles, and, at the end, daylight, and the waste of uprooted palms. The mob was sweeping past. They saw him; they howled and dashed to cut off his flight.

Lembken perceived his enemies. He doubled back, dashing in panic from room to room, back to the corridor. The mob was everywhere, searching for him, blocking all exits, their howls continuous.

Lembken fell on his knees and pulled a ray-rod from his tunic. With nerveless, shaking fingers he pulled up the guard. He held the weapon against his breast.

"Kill me!" he muttered hoarsely to the girl.

She dashed the ray-rod from his hand. She flung her arms about him; and thus the mob found them.

The giant leaped at them; his bellowings seemed to shake the walls. He sprang at Lembken, caught him by the throat, and forced his head upward. I saw steel in his hand. The monkey chattered, the parrot stretched out her neck and snapped, shrieking her phrases. Between the two the frail girl wrestled, dashing her weak fists into the giant's face.

The roaring mob choked the narrow corridor. "Death to him!" they shrieked. "Death! Death!"

The old man caught the words upon his tongue and screamed like a beast at bay. "Not death!" he yelled. "I'm Lembken. I can't die! I never thought of death—dying—going nowhere—nowhere—annihilation—I want to live—"

He cowered behind the girl, thrusting her between himself and his enemy. So furiously did she fight that she forced the giant's clutch from the old man's throat. She dashed her fists into his eyes again and again, tearing at him, too, until he gripped

her by the wrists and forced her backward. He looked into her face for the first time.

"Let him go!" she screamed. "Don't hurt him. He is old—he is old—he has done no harm—he is the People's Friend—he has told me so—I love him—"

The giant dropped her wrists and staggered back. His horror-painted face became a tragic mask. He moaned, and his hands groped impotently in the air for something that he failed to find. It was not the blood in his eyes that blinded him. For this was she whom he had sought, torn from his home, the last to share Lembken's favor, the child whom I had seen dragged from the Council Hall, her innocent child's heart loyal in his last hour to the only lover she knew.

Five days ago . . . it wrung my heart, the pity of it, this blossom of love that sprang from that festering rank soil of human baseness. . . .

Next moment the mob swept over us. They seized their prey and stamped the life out beneath their feet. I saw the quivering body tossed in air and dashed from room to room, hacked, trampled upon. I saw it poised high against the broken walls, saw the dark airplane swoop to safety amid a hail of ray-fire; and then the air was filled with zigzag sheets of blinding light.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Crescent and the Cross

THE rays flashed to and fro, in zigzag streaks, like forks of lightning, but infinitely more brilliant. I was half blind; a whirl of sparks obscured my vision of the conflict; but I could discern that Sanson still held the Science Wing, from whose windows guards armed with ray-rods were picking off men in some place beneath them. Our own men were invisible; I surmised from the shouting that they were assailing Sanson from the ground floor of the Temple.

We had gathered a tithe of our men together, and we plunged into the elevator shafts and scrambled down. My pulses shook with heavy fear as I entered the corridor below. But there stood David, and Elizabeth knelt at his side, with Esther's head in her lap. She looked up at me and smiled with so brave an effort that I realized her own anxiety. Somewhere in the deadly tumult Paul was fighting, unless, indeed, he

lay among the dead that strewed the Temple courts.

My men swept past me like a wind and poured along the corridor that led to the bridge.

"I have fulfilled my promise, Arnold," said David. "Now I must take Elizabeth within the shelter of the Air-scouts' Fort, our headquarters. You will follow with Esther, and then each of us must do as he thinks best, for our organization has broken down. All is not going well, Arnold: the ray-rods are emptying fast, and our attack upon the lower level of the wing has failed. Sanson has placed a ray-gun there. All depends on the air-scouts, and we must hold our positions until the battle-planes come to our aid."

He placed one arm about Elizabeth and hurried her toward the bridge. I picked up Esther, who was still plunged in that first sleep of stupor, and followed him. I saw him lead Elizabeth to safety in the fortress, behind our own men, but as I was about to follow him, a sheet of purple light swept past me, tearing a stanchion from the bridge and knocking down part of the wall of the brick house above, which had been for half a night my home.

A gun was playing upon the bridge. It was impossible to cross until it ceased. I drew back, waiting. The ray had found the weak places in the mighty buildings, and from the Temple top huge stones came crashing down, bounding along the courts and splintering into fragments. I saw one bridge go down, loaded with dead and living, as a deflected ray wrenched it from its piers. It poured its burden upon the stones of the court beneath, and from among the piles of dead, little figures leaped up and began to run like the denizens of a disturbed ants' nest, searching for refuge and finding none. They raced for the Council Wing, and there a blast from a ray-gun found them, and the steel entrance doors fell on them, and iron and men were ground to the same pulpy blackness.

I waited an instant, and then dashed wildly across the bridge, gaining the shelter of the Air-scouts' Fortress. I saw nobody. Before me was a flight of stone steps. I ran up, shouting. Nobody answered me. I gained the summit, panting and leaden-footed. The building appeared to be deserted.

From the roof I looked down. I saw the

Moslems swarming within the Temple. They had regained that. Where were our men? I looked across toward the Council Hall. I saw the locust cloud of the Mohammedans' assault break against the doors of the public offices beneath it. That was our refuge. Sanson had driven the revolutionists from every vantage-point but this, and here they resisted with the last of their ray-rods. The artillery flashes were playing on the stout walls, but they had not yet found the interstices, the pinholes of unprotected surface worn by weather, and the broad beams of purplish light seemed to fade into the air an inch from the glow-paint.

Then out of the south I saw a flock of giant birds come wheeling. They swooped toward us and resolved themselves into the air-plane fleet. They dipped their luminous wings and circled round us, and a mazy pattern of light began to play among the Moslems' ranks.

The battle-planes had come to fight for us.

I heard an outburst of cheering raised inside the Council Hall. I saw the crumpled Moslem ranks dissolve. The troops raced back for their sheltering walls. The ray artillery shot upward to meet the challenge of the air-ships' guns. To and fro overhead wheeled the great shining birds in soundless duel. The conflict seemed the more frightful because of its silence.

Presently, as the flock wheeled, I saw one air-plane tower like a shot pheasant, and tumble. It plunged into the court, and lay, a shapeless, twisted mass, upon the stones. The Moslem ray-guns had found its defenseless parts. Then a second battle-plane fell. It struck the Temple wall, seemed to cling there like a bat, and, fluttering its wings convulsively, a dying thing, fell to the stones beside its mate.

The Guard was winning. The enclosing citadel stood fast. The tide was turning again, and our last hope had failed us. I crouched upon the roof behind the glow-painted shield of a single empty air-plane that lay at anchor there. The sun was dipping into the west.

Twilight fell, and the solar light blazed up all over London. There the vast, servile mob watched the fight passively from the housetops, no doubt, while here the soundless conflict raged. The battle-planes were circling high up in the air; there they were safe, but their fire was utterly ineffective against the Guards' Fortress, and I judged

from its dwindling force that their storage batteries were growing depleted. Elsewhere the battle had generally ceased, though a ray-gun still pecked occasionally at the Council Hall, and now and then a mass of stone fell from the ruined palace and crashed into the court.

The game was in Sanson's hands, I reflected miserably. Our situation, always desperate since the first delay, had been growing less hopeful hourly. The only chance had been flung away in that mad rush to the People's House. Now Sanson was supreme, and he had concentrated his forces. Where was he, I wondered. I knew that his directing mind controlled the victorious Guard; I seemed to feel it in the coolness, the deliberation of our enemies.

Suddenly shouts broke out upon the walls, and were caught up and echoed back from the Council Hall. Southward, high in the sky, pin-points of light appeared, like vagrant stars, which became larger, extended, wheeled, and resolved themselves into the tiny glow parallelograms of distant battle-planes.

I heard the word "America" shouted from a thousand throats within the enclosing fortress.

If this was the Mormon fleet, come to aid Lembken, there was no doubt which side it would choose to join. That meant the end of liberty.

The air-scouts' fleet shot upward, drew together, and from its massed lines of light a single square shot through the ether, soaring up, rocket-like, moving in the direction of the oncoming ships, which seemed to hang poised above, like a new group of Pleiades. The rocket's apparent speed grew less as it mounted, until, so far away it was, it moved as slowly as any star. I saw another point of light detach itself, meteor-like, from the clustered orbs, and shoot downward. I held my breath. So all must have done. And not a ray was fired, and not a sound was heard anywhere. The two stars circled about each other, a binary orb; they moved together, and suddenly descended, the whole fleet following them, and the roar of answering voices rang from the Council Hall:

"Russia! Russia! The Liberator!"

Faster the lights came on, till they hung low in the sky, and the whole air-scouts' fleet soared upward and joined them. They swept the heavens in trailing light, and,

while some disappeared in the direction of the city, others began to trace those mazy patterns of light upon the fortress walls once more.

Again the Moslems' artillery answered: but the broad, purple flashes showed that the Hamburg fleet had heavier guns than our own air-scouts. The duet raged furiously.

The play of flashing lights illuminated the entire sky. The great sheets wheeled to and fro over the walls, and search-lights and glow-rays blended, and heliotrope and pink and blue. It seemed incredible, as one watched, that death lurked in those shining rays. Once a battle-plane, caught as she wheeled, came crashing down; but the next moment a shout went up from the Council Hall that made the whole pile resound. For the air-planes' artillery had found lodgment at last, and, hammering at the fortress, dislodging mortar and stones, struck home. With a roar a tower fell toppling, leaving a great breach in the encircling wall.

I saw the swarming figures of the defenders placing glow-shields over the gap, heedless of the devastating rays. Then, up the street, where the moving platforms approached the gates, I saw a shining serpent crawl, a glistening, endless thing that wound and twisted out of the distance, until, reaching the glacis, it began to show as a line of armed men, carrying before them a row of interlocked glow-shields.

The roof of the Council Hall, whereon no man could have lived, swept as it had been all day by the artillery, sprang suddenly into life. I saw the ragged figures of our men crowd it to cheer their Russian saviors, who, armed only with swords, swept up toward the parapet of the Moslems' Fortress. The battle-planes, seized from the revolting air-scouts of Hamburg and Berlin, had been followed by the invisible troop-planes that had conveyed the Russian army. They had staked everything upon that blow, trusting to the superhuman valor that had overthrown their ray-armed enemies before Tula's walls.

I saw the ray artillery shifted to meet the charge. Fire rushed from the conical tops. I heard the wild cheers and answers, saw the Russian line crumple into a charred heap, saw the next line come on, and the next, and the next, while the Moslems worked at their guns madly and the battle-planes above shot down their fire upon the

defenders. In the white glare of death the Russian lines withered like grass in a prairie fire; through it and over the bodies of their slain comrades, the oncoming mass moved steadily. The wall of interlocked ray-shields carried them into death's jaws, but the jaws closed on them. No man could stand before that light and live. Our hopes were dying as these brave men died in that holocaust. I saw the thinned lines quiver in that crisis that precedes defeat.

Then suddenly the darkness became as impenetrable as it was instantaneous. The ray went out from the defending guns upon the walls of the fortress. Only from the battle-planes above, the ribbons of purple and pink shot down.

For a moment I did not understand the magnitude of that event. Then I understood. Jones had cut the supply cables in the Vosges Mountains. He had fulfilled his promise, and in the very moment of defeat.

The same mad exultation seized us all. I heard the new note of victory shouted from the Council Hall. I seized up Esther in my arms and carried her toward the stairs. At the top of the flight I stopped and cast one last look toward the battlements. In the illumination of the searchlights I saw the Russians swarm through the breach, saw the whirl of their swords, saw them upon the bridges and in the courts, chasing the flying Moslems, harrying them, cutting them down.

Then I stood face to face with Sanson.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Admiral of the Air

SANSON'S gaze shifted from my face to Esther's, and, as if she felt the presence of the man, she stirred, and her eyes half opened.

"Arnold!" she whispered.

"Yes, dear," I answered, bending over her.

"I dreamed that—they had run up the annex thirty stories, Arnold, and painted the front all shining white."

"You must sleep, Esther," I said. "Try to sleep and not to dream."

She murmured something and her eyelids closed again. Again the merciful unconsciousness of sleep held her.

I placed her against the anchored air-plane and turned to Sanson. He was facing me

with a strange look, that half-quizzical one that I remembered so well. It had in it more of human kindness than any of the other expressions of the man's moods.

"Arnold," he said softly, "if I were an ignorant man I might be tempted to believe that there is really a God, sometimes."

That was his way—to speak dispassionately in moments of catastrophic importance.

"Why?" I inquired.

"Because He is so merciful to His defectives, Arnold. To think that you, with your missing five centimeters, should almost have beaten me! Come," he continued, clapping his hand on my shoulder, "a truce for a few minutes, or until that Mormon mob of yours breaks into this building. A truce, for the sake of our old comradeship. You are not to blame for your share in this night's ruin of civilization. You were the victim of circumstance. And then—you are a defective, and couldn't understand. Arnold, I have never had any friend but you. And sometimes I feel the need of one. Even the gods felt that, and I am far from a god, though, perhaps, later—" he broke off suddenly, and resumed in a less personal key.

"Join me," he said. "Here is my frank proposal: Join me, and, since I would not hold any woman to me against her will, if Esther chooses you she shall be yours. This night has undone the labor of many years, but those that are past are but as a drop in an ocean to those that are to come. I have the secret of immortal life—not ghostly life in some gold-decorated heaven, but life in the flesh, the only life we know. I will bestow the gift on you—"

"Let it die with you!" I answered passionately.

He laughed. "This night's work, which seems to you so wonderful, is but an episode," he said. "Come with me to America, Arnold. In six months I can build up my world anew. I shall be less scrupulous and humane in future with this miserable mob. No moron shall live, no defective go free. I have resolved that. Man can rise only by crushing out weakness and setting himself upon the necks of those who were born to serve. From this time onward it is a battle to the death against all that retards the human race."

His features flushed with passion. I stared at him, amazed, dumfounded at the man's audacity of mind. Trapped here, a

prisoner upon the fortress roof, his life already forfeited if he were found, this man of sixty years planned to build up a universal empire. He was mad, without doubt, mad enough to dream impossible things and make them his in his mind's fertile kingdom, but it was such madness as accomplishes the impossible.

"Sanson," I said, "I will do this much for you. I will hide you to-night from the mob's fury, in a little room near the roof of this building, so that you may not be torn in pieces. I will assure you a fair trial at the hands of the new government, and perhaps they will not wish to start the new era with a judicial execution; perhaps they will regard you as the product of this dead age, not the cause of it. That is all I can do."

Would his dreams vanish in that hard light of reality? I looked at him and saw his face fall, as though my words had brought him to a recognition of reality. He spoke slowly, in a bewildered manner, as if he were struggling to understand my meaning. "Where is it?" he asked.

I took him by the arm and led him to the elevator entrance. "It is a little place under the roof," I said. "The elevator passes it. It is only a hole in the wall, and one would not look for you there."

I pressed the button mechanically, but the elevator did not ascend. Perhaps it had been destroyed, or, again, the cutting of the cables might have shut off the motive power.

Sanson withdrew his arm from mine. He assumed a listening attitude. Then: "Arnold!" he cried. "Look there!"

Unconsciously I relaxed my watchfulness, and Sanson dealt me a buffet with his full force that sent me flying down the empty shaft.

I had a confused sense of falling through space, of clutching at the shaft walls; then I was upon my knees, bruised, and my face covered with blood, staring up at the light overhead.

Providentially the elevator cables had not been cut; it was the shutting off of the power that had stopped it some fifteen feet from the top. Otherwise I should have fallen to instant death, as Sanson intended.

Still dazed, but dominated by the realization of Esther's predicament, I sprang to my feet and leaped for the ironwork of the shaft. I clung to it. I reached the top in an in-



I SAW THE RAGGED FIGURES OF OUR MEN
ONLY WITH SWORDS,

credibly short space of time. I staggered out upon the roof once more. I saw a dozen Sansons, and each of them carried Esther in his arms.

Then a shadow glided toward me, and a hand was laid on my shoulder. I looked into the face of Air-Admiral Hancock, who was leaning toward me out of the dark dispatch-plane. No, it was not the dispatch-plane, but an unprotected battle-plane, of small dimensions, having at the prow a pair of the elongated jaws that I had noticed before. He knew me.

"Where is Sanson?" he demanded quickly. "He was here. He was tracked here."



CROWD THE ROOF OF THE COUNCIL HALL TO CHEER THEIR RUSSIAN SAVIORS, WHO, ARMED SWEPT UP TOWARD THE PARAPET OF THE MOSLEMS' FORTRESS.

I pointed into the sky, where a parallelogram of light was diminishing to an irregular star. I leaped into the plane beside him. "Take me!" I cried. "He has stolen Esther—the woman of the cylinder!"

Hancock said not a word, but touched the lever. In an instant we had shot upward and raced like a swallow across the void, skimming and dipping as the wind caught us and the heavy prow plunged through the unequal air-banks.

The shadowy buildings drew together beneath us. The shouts of the multitude grew faint and died. The luminous point grew larger, and against the sky, now whit-

ened by the rising moon, I saw the dark body between the glow-lines, a long way distant, as one sees a ship from a mountain top. Sanson was heading southward, perhaps with the intent of reaching France and rallying the forces of the government there before pursuing his plans further. We mounted higher. The forests stretched beneath us. Always we mounted.

I cast a glance at Hancock's face. There was a look on it that boded ill for Sanson. I was trying to remember something that Jones had told me about the relationship between the two, but my anxious thoughts beat down the elusive memory. I, too,

felt that there could be no mercy for Sanson.

Would any one have mercy? I saw the answer to that question swiftly, for, glancing back, I saw two lines of air-planes strung out behind, like flying geese, converging toward our leadership. Battle-planes, scout-planes, bright against the brightening heaven, all came hot on the chase. I knew they were in pursuit of our common enemy, and I knew that there was hardly a man in London but had some outrage to avenge.

Higher we mounted through the bitter cold. My hands were numb; but Hancock kept the wheel, seated there, a grim, immovable, resolute figure. Now we burst into the heart of a fierce, rocking snowstorm, which blotted out the flight of our enemy, but by some instinct Hancock seemed to know his course, and held it surely till we rose above the storm and saw the glow parallelogram again and nearer.

Sanson still rose. He must have sighted the pursuit long before and resolved to test our endurance against his. The moon rode higher; dawn was not far away. We were rushing toward the sea, which lay, a blur of inky blackness, under us, edged by the white line of the chalk cliffs of the southern shore. All the time we gained steadily.

But Sanson did not mean to cross the sea. Perhaps he was planning to turn and seek some English city where he could gain a breathing-space in which to defy the new order and reorganize the old. He wheeled and the long lines of the pursuing planes struggling upward wheeled together, trying to cut off his flight. Sanson, mounting still, struck out eastwardly. But Hancock, with a furious swoop, drove in toward him.

I saw Sanson sitting at the wheel, one arm still clasping Esther. He stopped in the air and remained immobile as we veered toward him.

"What do you want?" he shouted.

The tone of Hancock's answer was implacable. "My son, Sanson," he answered.

He placed his hand upon a lever, and the gigantic jaws upon our air-plane gaped. We dashed for Sanson with terrific force. I shouted in horror, laying my fingers on Hancock's arm and pointing to Esther. But he did not seem to hear me or feel my touch—all his mind was intent upon the accomplishment of his end. I doubt, indeed, whether he had realized that I was beside him during the entire flight. He

drove his vessel home, and like a hawk we plunged, struck Sanson's vessel amidships, and the jaws closed, smashing through steel and glow-shield.

One instant, in the dead interval of the stopped momentum, we hung motionless. I flung myself across the side, grasped Esther, clasped her in my arms, and dragged her from Sanson's side. I pulled her over the bows. Then I saw Hancock leap into Sanson's plane and grasp him by the throat. Only the satisfaction of physical slaughter could appease the need for that revenge on which he had so long brooded.

Our air-plane tipped, righted herself, and drifted away. I clung to Esther. I did not know how to steer or guide, but Hancock must have locked the mechanism to the halt, for we drifted idly, balancing upon the wind. Watching, I saw the two men wrestling in Sanson's plane.

The vessel shuddered as she hung poised in the void, mortally gashed, yet fighting still for her dominion of the air. She quivered from prow to stern, and then, of her own accord, shot like a rocket upward. Up she went, till she was only a speck in the sky above. Then from those heights something went falling earthward. At first it seemed to swim the ether, then it plunged swiftly down, passed like a projectile, and disappeared.

I saw a tiny figure that stood alone on the doomed air-plane, and, infinitely small as it appeared, I knew that it was Sanson. I fancied I could see the man's proud bearing; I thought his arms were folded across his breast. The moonlight gilded him, and others have told me that he seemed to ride through the air resplendent, as though transfigured by some demoniac power.

Like Lucifer he stood, high above all, high over his wrecked world. I pictured his disdain, and the contempt for man with which he shrouded himself in those last moments. The world had broken him at the last, but his colossal spirit could never be quenched.

Then the air-vessel plunged into the moon's heart and vanished.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

The New Order

THREE months have passed. It is Easter Day, and we have only begun to grapple with the difficulties before us.

But we are working with a faith that will overcome all obstacles. All the world is at work, for the same impulse was felt simultaneously in all lands. The Mormon airplanes never arrived, because, practically at the same hour, America rose in revolt against her masters. And the Sanson régime has been swept away forever.

We were taken from our air-plane by the air-scouts who followed us, and brought back to London. Our friends, who had thought us dead, were overjoyed at our return. It was a wonderful reunion, with few shadows to mar it, for Paul had passed uninjured through the fighting and was there to welcome us. And gradually, as she awoke, we broke the news of everything to Esther.

The amazing thing about that was that she was much more calm in learning the truth than we in telling it. She seemed to accept our statements almost without surprise.

I call to mind the second huge public gathering on the day after the victory, and the dread of massacre, which proved ridiculous. The populace had been taught carefully that the Russians were bloodthirsty savages, instead of which they seemed to be grave enthusiasts. It was a shock to most of us to discover that they considered themselves crusaders, upon a mission to restore Christ to the world. I recall vividly the great red crosses on the breasts of their white uniforms, the people's wonder and terror at the horses, the fear of the Russians' dogs, which soon stormed the mob's affections and seem to have reopened a closed avenue to human hearts. Absurd as it would have sounded only a year ago, I think men love each other better because of their four-footed friends, the animal life that the world banished when Science set up her rule.

Then I recall the entrance of the Russian leaders into the capital, to attend the re-consecration of the Temple, and the joyful solemnity of that service. Then the universal joy at the release of all the inmates of the defectives' shops, the tears and cries that accompanied the restoration to their families of those who had been thought lost forever: husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, friends and friends. No one was afraid to be glad. It was as if a dark cloud had rolled away and disclosed the sun.

And the amazement and enthusiasm as

the people listened to the teachings of primitive Christianity, which had survived in Russia alone, and now, at last denationalized, was made the possession of the whole world. After three months there are still crowds at all street corners, hearing the doctrine and the story of Christ from preachers and missionaries.

And Bishop Alfred at the consecration, proudly declaring himself as Alfred London.

There is so much to do, and only a tithe of it has begun. Indeed, it would have been impossible, but for the decision that the old national boundaries should be restored, and each state work out its problems independently. Then there was the question as to the composition of the new British government, and it was resolved that, wherever possible, the Committee should avail itself to the uttermost of the established order.

Thus, for the present, because it is an organic growth and not a paper scheme, the socialized state will continue. It would be impossible to go back to the squalor and degradation; to return, recognizing that, if ever revolution was justified, that of our fathers was—against the greed of a materialistic century that dared to traffic in the bodies of men and cast the shadow of poverty upon the world.

The Council will be self-perpetuating, and no man will necessarily be barred from it by birth. There is an idea abroad that its members should be bound by vows of poverty. We shall have no representative government, no popular elections, no tyranny of an unthinking majority—only a series of widening folk-motes to decide matters of common life and none of government.

But if we are tolerant and lax, so that we resemble more a benevolent anarchy than an organized state, we have set our faces like flint against two things. First of these comes divorce. The family and religion are to be the basic principles of our State. Divorce will not be recognized under any circumstances whatever; and so far is this from being considered tyrannous that, as in the old days, as under Sanson even, the vast bulk of the people do not desire it. In the old time it was the privilege of a small caste alone—that same caste that, by abandoning its duties and responsibilities, brought down the old order of civilization. We are convinced that the permanence of the marriage bond is the foundation

of every society of free men and women.

The second is eugenics. Looking back, we see how this madness overran the world, until, within a century from the time of its birth, it had enslaved humanity. It was the natural product of a time which, steeped in materialism, laughed at the belief in a human soul, or its concomitant, that each soul needed to work out its earthly existence in a body adapted to its abilities. But even from the material view-point we see that the movement was fallacious.

Acknowledging the hereditary nature of weakmindedness, nervous diseases, and certain rare maladies and deformities, we know that the proportion of these variants has remained constant through history; that the Mendelian recessive qualities flare up in the well-born and the ill-born alike. Moreover, since there was no stable human norm, the eugenists' demands increased continually, till they had bound four-fifths of the world to their Juggernaut car.

There is a place for every one in our world, and there are asylums for the insane and homes for imbeciles, the only unadaptables to whom we deny liberty.

So the first act of the people after their victory was to burn the bureaus of Prints and Indexes, and Pedigrees and Relationships. That was our only act of vandalism.

More than everything else we hold to Christianity as the foundation of our civilization. But the Visible Church is humble in her hour of success. It is no time of triumph for her. The first act of the Holy Orthodox Church was to appeal to ecumenical Christianity to forego all disputes that had arisen since the last universal Council until they can be solved at another which we hope to call. Reverently, penitently, at the huge consecration meeting in the Temple, her leaders asked for guidance and inspiration.

We realized that, so long as Christendom remains divided, the sects are flouting Christ, who prayed that all might be one. At present sectarianism inspires in us the same horror that all schism inspired centuries ago.

The Age of Faith is coming back to the world, and, as in that splendid thirteenth century, when it was in the zenith of its dominion, there is a sense of youth in us.

We feel that we are upon the threshold of a new epoch, uniting the triumphs of all preceding ages. It is an age of joy, and will be vitalized by that art which, since the days of the Reformation, has been sundered from human lives. Its first achievement will be the magnificent cathedral which is to rise upon the site of the old Ant Temple.

It will be a new world indeed. We know each age has its own cruelties: the Inquisition of the sixteenth century; religious massacres in the seventeenth; in the nineteenth, factory slavery and the prisons with their silent cells.

We do not hope greatly to lessen this sum of suffering. There will be injustice always, new wrongs will arise, new evils that must be fought; but we believe that the Christian norm will always remain with us as a corrective.

And lest the passions of mankind break loose again and perpetrate new horrors, as in the Amazon and Congo valleys of old, new knightly orders are to arise, on the lines of those of long ago, pledged to fight human wrongs.

They will consist of young men between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-five, vowed during that period to poverty, chastity, and obedience; and not only will they serve humanity but, we believe, their own period of discipline will make them the guardians of their nations' freedom after their years of service are at an end.

To-morrow bands of axmen are to leave London to settle Surrey and Kent. Paul and Elizabeth are to go, and later Esther and I intend to follow them. David will join us when he can be spared from his work in the new government.

It is Easter Day, and in the consecrated Temple I hear the anthem rise:

Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:
Therefore let us keep the feast.

Not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

The crowds in the great courts are kneeling. I kneel with Esther among them. We know that the sacrifice has leavened the world with truth that shall never pass away.

THE END

"Judith of Blue Lake Ranch"—a stirring story of ranch life, by Jackson Gregory—begins in the October number.